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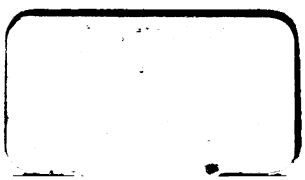

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JUSTIN WINSOR,
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

WESTERN WINDOWS

AND

OTHER POEMS.

BY

JOHN JAMES PIATT.

NEW YORK:
PUBLISHED BY HURD AND HOUGHTON
Cambridge: Riverside Press.
1872.

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DEDICATION.

CINCINNATI, OHIO, Sept., 1868.

My dear Mr. Prentice:

I owe you many of those debts that one friend can only pay another (and never pay in full) out of his heart; please to think my dedication of this book an acknowledgment of them. The poems in the present volume have, with a few exceptions, been under cover (and under fire, too, for that matter,) before; but they are here massed, so to speak ——"for a general review, doubtless," will you say?

Many of the pieces in this collection are suggestive to me of the hours when I was associated with you in a companionship which must always seem very dear to me when I recall it: this is a merit which I may find in them without blame, I am sure.

With many wishes for your health and happiness, I remain,

Very affectionately,

Your friend,

J. J. P.

GEO. D. PRENTICE, ESQ.,
Louisville, Ky.

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WESTERN WINDOWS.

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WESTERN WINDOWS.

Crimsoning the woodlands dumb and hoary,
  Bleak with long November winds and rains,
Lo, at sunset, breathes a sudden glory,
  Breaks a fire on all the western panes!

Eastward far I see the restless splendor
  Shine through many a window-lattice bright;
Nearer all the farmhouse gables render
  Flame for flame and melt in breathless light.

Many a mansion, many a cottage lowly,
  Lost in radiance, palpitate the same
At the touch of Beauty strange and holy,
  All transfigured in the evening flame.

Luminous, within—a marvellous vision—
  Things familiar half-unreal show;
In the effluence of Land Elysian,
  Every bosom feels a holier glow.

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Faces lose, as at some wondrous portal,
Earthly masks, and heavenly features wear;
Many a mother, like a saint immortal,
Folds her child, a halo'd angel fair.

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THE MOWER IN OHIO.

JUNE, MDCCCLXIV.

THE bees in the clover are making honey, and I am making my hay:
The air is fresh, I seem to draw a young man's breath to-day.

The bees and I are alone in the grass: the air is so very still
I hear the dam, so loud, that shines beyond the sullen mill.

Yes, the air is so still that I hear almost the sounds I can not hear—
That, when no other sound is plain, ring in my empty ear:

The chime of striking scythes, the fall of the heavy swaths they sweep—

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They ring about me, resting, when I waver half asleep;

So still I am not sure if a cloud, low down, unseen there be,
Or if something brings a rumor home of the cannon so far from me:

Far away in Virginia where Joseph and Grant, I know,
Will tell them what I meant when first I had my mowers go!

Joseph he is my eldest one, the only boy of my three
Whose shadow can darken my door again, and lighten my heart for me.

Joseph he is my eldest—how his scythe was striking ahead!
William was better at shorter heats, but Jo in the long-run led.

William he was my youngest; John, between them, I somehow see,
When my eyes are shut, with a little board at his head in Tennessee.

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But William came home one morning early, from Gettysburg, last July
(The mowing was over already, although the only mower was I:)

William, my captain, came home for good to his mother; and I'll be bound
We were proud and cried to see the flag that wrapt his coffin around;

For a company from the town came up ten miles with music and gun:
It seem'd his country claim'd him then—as well as his mother—her son.

But Joseph is yonder with Grant to-day, a thousand miles or near,
And only the bees are abroad at work with me in the clover here.

Was it a murmur of thunder I heard that humm'd again in the air?
Yet, may be, the cannon are sounding now their Onward to Richmond there.

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But under the beech by the orchard, at noon, I sat
an hour it would seem—
It may be I slept a minute, too, or waver'd into a
dream.

For I saw my boys, across the field, by the flashes
as they went,
Tramping a steady tramp as of old with the strength
in their arms unspent;

Tramping a steady tramp, they moved like soldiers
that march to the beat
Of music that seems, a part of themselves, to rise
and fall with their feet;

Tramping a steady tramp, they came with flashes of
silver that shone,
Every step, from their scythes that rang as if they
needed the stone—

(The field is wide and heavy with grass)—and, com
ing toward me they beam'd
With a shine of light in their faces at once, and—
surely I must have dream'd!

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For I sat alone in the clover-field, the bees were working ahead.
There were three in my vision—remember, old man: and what if Joseph were dead!

But I hope that he and Grant (the flag above them both, to boot,)
Will go into Richmond together, no matter which is ahead or afoot!

Meantime alone at the mowing here—an old man somewhat gray—
I must stay at home as long as I can, making myself the hay.

And so another round—the quail in the orchard whistles blithe—
But first I'll drink at the spring below, and whet again my scythe.

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READING THE MILESTONE.

I STOPP'D to read the Milestone here,
A laggard school-boy, long ago;
I came not far—my home was near—
But ah, how far I long'd to go!

Behold a number and a name,
A finger, Westward, cut in stone:
The vision of a city came,
Across the dust and distance shown.

Around me lay the farms asleep
In hazes of autumnal air,
And sounds that quiet loves to keep
Were heard, and heard not, every-where.

I read the Milestone, day by day:
I yearn'd to cross the barren bound,
To know the golden Far-away,
To walk the new Enchanted Ground!

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THE PIONEER'S CHIMNEY.

We leave the highway here a little space—
(So much of life is near so much of death:)
The chimney of a dwelling still is seen,
A little mound of ruin, overgrown
With lithe, long grasses and domestic weeds,
Among the apple-trees (the ancestors
Of yonder orchard fruited from their boughs)—
The apple-trees that, when the place was rough
With the wild forests, and the land was new,
He planted: one, departed long ago,
But still a presence unforgotten here,
Who bless'd me in my boyhood, with his hands
That seem'd like one's anointed. Gentle, strong,
And warm'd with sunny goodness, warming all,
Was he, familiar by the reverend name
Of Uncle Gardner in our neighborhood:
His love had grown to common property
By ties that Nature draws from man to man,
And so at last had claim'd the bond of blood.

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He was an elder in the land, and held
His first proprietary right, it seem'd,
From Nature's self; for, in an earlier day,
He came with others, who of old had reach'd
Their neighbor hands across New England farms,
Over the mountains to this Western Land—
A journey long and slow and perilous,
With many hardships and the homesick look
Of wife and children backward; chose his farm,
Builded his house, and clear'd, by hard degrees,
Acres that years ago were meadows broad,
Or wheat-fields rocking in the summer heat.

His children grew, and son and daughter pass'd
Into the world that grew around, and some
Into that world which evermore unseen
Is still about us, and the graveyard where
Their bodies slept (a few half sinking stones,
A stranger's eyes would hardly see them, show
Seventy rods yonder in the higher ground)
Gave still a tenderer title, year by year,
To the dear places earn'd by earlier toil.

Meanwhile the years that made these woody vales
An eager commonwealth of crowding men

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Pass'd, one by one, and every thing was changed;
And he, whose limbs were like the hickory's when
He came with life's wrought vigor here, was changed:
He heard the voice that tells men they are old.
Yet not the less he moved his usual rounds,
Walk'd his old paths; not idle, sweated still
With scythe or sickle in the hay or wheat;
Follow'd his plow when in the April sun
The blackbird chatter'd after and the crow
Far-off look'd anxious for the new-dropp'd corn;
And gave the winter hours their services,
With sheep abroad on slopes that, slanting south,
Breathe off the snow and show a warming green,
With cattle penn'd at home or bounding flail:
So, not forgetting social offices
Throughout all seasons, (gaining so the love
That went acknowledged in his common name,)
He, like the Servant in the Parable,
Doing his duty, waited for his Lord.

The chimney shows enough for memory,
And, it may be, a stranger passing close,
If thoughtful, well might think a tender thought
Of vanish'd fireside faces, in his dream
Suddenly lighted by a vanish'd fire.

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And should the apple-trees that linger, loth
To end their blossoming, attract his eye,
Their fragrance would not pass unrecognized
For deeper gifts than fragrance. He is gone
Who planted them, and thirty years are gone.
Now, if you look a quarter-mile away,
Beyond the toll-gate and its lifted sweep,
You see a prouder house—not new nor old—
Beneath whose later roof no spirit dwells
That had its tenure here: a stranger holds
The secondary ownership of law.

It is a story, common though it seem,
Tender and having pathos for the heart
Which knows, but will not know, that he who says
"My own," and looks to-day on willing fields,
And sets his family tree in trusted ground,
To-morrow hears another answer "Mine."
Listen, if you will listen. It is hard
To go an alien from familiar doors
When we are young, to wrestle where we go,
And win or lose exulting—we are strong;
But it is pitiful when weak and old,
When only for the near in life we seek,

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And heaven, yearn'd after, is not thought of far,
To lose our shelter and to want for rest.

Of Uncle Gardner's children three were dead—
Yonder they lie. Their mother and two with him
(Two youngest: one a boy of fourteen years,
His latest child—a girl three years beyond)
Breathed in his close, contented atmosphere;
An elder daughter, wedded years before,
Lived far away in watery Michigan;
His eldest son—and the first-born of all—
Thrived as a merchant in the city near,
Had thriven, at least, or so 'twas said, and he
For some keen chance had got the old man's will
To be his bond. The father pledged the land—
Willing for the grown man, yet for the boy
And for his girl at home regretfully,
Deeming the chance a rash one. From that day
He wrought his daily labors ill-content,
And with a trouble in his countenance,
That would not put a false face on his heart.
To things familiar came a subtle change.
The brook that long ago, companion-like,
Had grown acquainted with his solitude,
And, later, made him music when he walk'd

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And led his children through the pasture-ground
Up to the haying or the harvest-gap,
A noisy mimic of their prattled words,
Now seem'd to lift a stranger's face at him,
Wondering why he came there, who he was,
Or murmur'd, with a long and low lament,
Some undercurrent of an exile's song
That is not on his lips but in his heart.
Nothing was as it had been: something vague,
That Present of the Future which is born
Within the bosom, whispering what will be,
Met him and follow'd him, and would not cease
To meet and follow him: it seem'd to say
"The place that knew you shall know you no more."
And oftentimes he saw the highway stirr'd
With slowly-journeying dust, and, passing slow,
The many who forever in our land
Were going farther, driven by goads unseen,
Or not content and looking for the new;
And then he thought of how in those dear days
He, too, had ventured, and again he saw
With steadfast eyes forgotten faces, known
When he was young, and others dear to him
From whom he parted with regret but firm
In the strong purposes which build the world:

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Thought of his consolation—she most dear
Was with him, they most helpless with him, too,
For whom he sought a newer world of hope:
"But I am old," he murmur'd, "she is old,"
And saw his hand was shaken like his thought.

Such were his troubled fancies. When he slept,
In his slow dreams—with lagging team, the last
Of many that in yonder meadows foal'd
Grew and became a portion of the place—
Journeying far away, and never more
Reaching his journey's goal, (a weary road
Whose end came only with the waking day,)
He seem'd to pass, and always 'twas the same:
Through new-built villages of joyous homes,
Homes not for him, by openings recent-made,
But not for him, by cultivated farms
Of other men—and always 'twas the same.
Then, when he woke and found the dream a dream,
And through his window shone the sun and brought
The faint rich smell of the new-tassel'd corn,
More fragrant from the dew that weigh'd it down,
He murmur'd of his fields—"For other men;
They are not mine. The mortgage will be closed;
The mortgage goes wherever I shall go."

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So pass'd the quarter of a year, and so
The old man, burden'd with his little world,
Felt it upon his shoulders, stooping down,
Bent more with this than every other year.
And summer pass'd to autumn: in his door
He sat and saw the leaves, his friends of old,
Audible in the sunshine, falling, falling,
With a continuous rustle—music fit
For his accompanying thought. At last it came,
The blow that reach'd his heart before it came,
For all was lost: the son whose risk he placed
Both on his children's home and on his heart
Was ruin'd, as the careless worldlings say—
Ruin'd indeed, it seem'd, for on his brain
The quick stroke flash'd: for many years the son
Breathed in a world in which he did not live.

The old man took the blow but did not fall—
Its weight had been before. The land was sold,
The mortgage closed. That winter, cold and long,
(Permitted by the hand that grasp'd his all
That winter pass'd he here,) beside his fire,
He talk'd of moving in the spring, he talk'd
(While the shrill sap cried in a troubled blaze)
Like one whose life was not all broken down,

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Cheerfully garrulous, with words that show
False witnesses of hope and seeming strength
When these are gone and come not. In the spring,
When the first warmth had brooded every-where,
He sat beside his doorway in that warmth,
Watching the wagons on the highway pass,
With something of the memory of his dread
In the last autumn; and he fell asleep.
Perhaps within his sleep he seem'd again
Journeying far away for evermore,
Leaving behind the homes of other men,
Seeking a newer home for those he loved,
A pioneer again. And so he slept—

And still he sleeps: his grave is one of those.

His wife soon joined his sleep beside him there.

Their children Time has taken and the world.

The chimney shows enough for memory,
The graves remain; all other trace is gone,
Except the apple-trees that linger, loth
To end their blossoming. In restless moods
I used to wander hither oftentimes,

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And often linger'd till the twilight came,
Touch'd with the melancholy breathed by change;
And something in the atmosphere, I thought,
Remain'd of hours and faces that had been.
Then, thinking of the Past and all I knew
And all remember'd of it—most of him
Whose vanish'd fireside blazed so near me here—
My fancy, half unconscious, shaped the things
Which had been, and among the quiet trees
The chimney from its burial mound arose;
The ruin'd farm-house grew a quiet ghost—
Its walls were thrill'd with murmur-music, humm'd
By inner voices scarcely heard without;
And from the window breathed a vaporous light
Into the outer mist of vernal dark,
And lo! a crowd of sparks against the sky
Sprang suddenly, at times, and from the wood
(The wood?—no wood was here for forty years!)
Bark'd the shrill fox and all the stars hung bright.
Till, busy with the silence far away,
(And whether heard or heard not hardly known,)
First indistinct, then louder, nearer still,
And ever louder, grew a tremulous roar;
Then, sudden, flared a torch from out the night,
And, eastward half-a-mile, the shimmering train

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Hurried across the darkness and the dream,
And all my fantasy was gone, at once—
The lighted window and the fireside sound:
I saw the heap of ruin underfoot,
And overhead the leaves were jarr'd awake,
Whispering a moment of the flying fright,
And far away the whistle, like a cry,
Shrill in the darkness reach'd the waiting town.

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FIRE BEFORE SEED.*

How bright to-night lies all the Vale,
  Where Autumn scatter'd harvest gold
And, far off, humm'd the rumbling flail
  When dark autumnal noons were cold!

The fields put on a mask of fire,
  Forever changing, in the dark;
Lo, yonder upland village spire
  Flashes in air a crimson spark!

I see the farm-house roofs arise,
  Among their guardian elms asleep:
Redly the flame each window dyes,
  Through vines that chill and leafless creep.

* It is customary in some portions of the West to rake the last year's stubble of corn into windrows and burn it preparatory to breaking the ground in Spring for a new planting. This burning is generally done after nightfall: its effect on the landscape these lines were intended to describe.

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Along the lonely lane, that goes
  Darkening beyond the dusky hill,
Amid the light the cattle doze
  And sings the 'waken'd April rill.

The mill by rocks is shadow'd o'er,
  But, overhead, the shimmering trees
Stand sentinels of the rocky shore
  And bud with fire against the breeze!

Afar the restless ripple shakes
  Arrows of splendor through the wood,
Then all its noisy water breaks
  Away in glimmering solitude.

Gaze down into the bottoms near,
  Where all the darkness broadly warms:
The priests who guard the fires appear
  Gigantic shadows, pigmy forms!

The enchanted Spring shall here awake
  With harvest hope among her flowers;
And nights of holy dew shall make
  The morning smile for toiling hours.

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Behold the Sower's sacrifice
  Upon the altars of the Spring!—
O dead Past, into flame arise:
  New seed into the earth we fling!

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KING'S TAVERN.

FAR-OFF spires, a mist of silver, shimmer from the
far-off town;
Haunting here the dreary turnpike stands the tavern,
crumbling down.

Half-a-mile before you pass it, half-a-mile when you
are gone,
Like a ghost it comes to meet you, ghost-like still it
follows on.

Never more the sign-board, swinging, flaunts its
gilded wonder there:
"Philip King"—a dazzled harvest shock'd in west-
ern sunset air!

Never, as with nearer tinkle through the dust of
long ago,
Creep the Pennsylvania wagons up the twilight—
white and slow.

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With a low, monotonous thunder, yonder flies the hurrying train—
Hark, the echoes in the quarry!—in the woodland lost again!

Never more the friendly windows, red with warmth and Christian light,
Breathe the traveler's benediction to his brethren in the night.

Old in name The Haunted Tavern holds the barren rise alone—
Standing high in air deserted, ghost-like long itself has grown.

Not a pane in any window—many a raggéd corner-bit:
Boys, the strolling exorcisors, gave the ghost their notice—"Quit."

Jamestown-weeds have close invaded, year by year, the bar-room door,
Where, within, in damp and silence gleams the lizard on the floor.

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Through the roof the drear Novembers trickle down
the midnight slow;
In the Summer's warping sunshine green with moss
the shingles grow.

Yet in Maying wind the locust, sifting sunny blossom,
snows,
And the rose-vine still remembers some dear face
that loved the rose:

Climbing up a Southern casement, looking in neg-
lected air;
And, in golden honey-weather, careful bees are hum-
ming there.

In the frozen moon at midnight some have heard,
when all was still—
Nothing, I know! A ghostly silence keeps the
tavern on the hill!

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FIRES IN ILLINOIS.

How bright this weird autumnal eve—
  While the wild twilight clings around,
Clothing the grasses every-where,
  With scarce a dream of sound!

The high horizon's northern line,
  With many a silent-leaping spire,
Seems a dark shore—a sea of flame—
  Quick, crawling waves of fire!

I stand in dusky solitude,
  October breathing low and chill,
And watch the far-off blaze that leaps
  At the wind's wayward will.

These boundless fields, behold, once more,
  Sea-like in vanish'd summers stir;
From vanish'd autumns comes the Fire—
  A lone, bright harvester!

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I see wide terror lit before—
  Wild steeds, fierce herds of bison here,
And, blown before the flying flame,
  The flying-footed deer!

Long trains (with shaken bells, that moved
  Along red twilights sinking slow)
Whose wheels grew weary on their way,
  Far westward, long ago;

Lone wagons bivouack'd in the blaze,
  That, long ago, stream'd wildly past;
Faces from that bright solitude
  In the hot gleam aghast!

A glare of faces like a dream,
  No history after or before,
Inside the horizon with the flames,
  The flames—nobody more!

That vision vanishes in me,
  Sudden and swift and fierce and bright;
Another gentler vision fills
  The solitude, to-night:

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The horizon lightens every-where,
  The sunshine rocks on windy maize;
Hark, every-where are busy men,
  And children at their plays!

Far church-spires twinkle at the sun,
  From villages of quiet born,
And, far and near, and every-where,
  Homes stand amid the corn.

No longer driven by wind, the Fire
  Makes all the vast horizon glow,
But, numberless as the stars above,
  The windows shine below!

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RIDING TO VOTE.

THE OLD DEMOCRAT IN THE WEST.

YONDER the bleak old Tavern stands—the faded sign before,
That years ago a setting sun and banded harvest bore:
The Tavern stands the same to-day—the sign you look upon
Has glintings of the dazzled sheaves, but nothing of the sun.

In Jackson's days a gay young man, with spirit hale and blithe,
And form like the young hickory, so tough and tall and lithe,
I first remember coming up—we came a wagon-load,
A dozen for Old Hickory—this rough November road.

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Ah! forty years—they help a man, you see, in getting gray;
They can not take the manly soul, that makes a man, away!
It's forty years, or near: to-day I go to vote once more;
Here, half a mile away, we see the crowd about the door.

My boys, in Eighteen Sixty—what! my boys? my men, I mean!
(No better men nor braver souls in flesh-and-blood are seen!)
One twenty-six, one twenty-three, rode with their father then:
The ballot-box remembers theirs—my vote I'll try again!

The ballot-box remembers theirs, the country well might know—
Though in a million only two for little seem to go;
But, somehow, when my ticket slipp'd I dream'd of Jackson's day:
The land, I thought, has need of One whose will will find a way!

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'*He* did not waver when the need had call'd for steadfast thought—
The word he spoke made plain the deed that lay behind it wrought;"
And while I mused the Present fell, and, breathing back the Past,
Again it seem'd the hale young man his vote for Jackson cast!

Thank God it was not lost!—my vote I did not cast in vain!
I go alone to drop my vote—the glorious vote again;
Alone—where three together fell but one to-day shall fall;
But though I go alone to-day, one voice shall speak for all!

For when our men, awaking quick, from hearth and threshold came,
Mine did not say, "Another day!" but started like a flame;
I'll vote for them as well as me; they died as soldiers can,
But in my vote their voices each shall claim the right of man.

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The elder left his wife and child—my vote for these shall tell;
The younger's sweet-heart has a claim—I 'll vote for her as well!
Yes! for the myriad speechless tongues, the myriad offer'd lives,
The desolation at the heart of orphans and of wives!

I go to give my vote alone—I curse your shameless shame
Who fight for traitors here at home in Peace's holy name!
I go to give my vote alone, but even while I do,
I vote for dead and living, all—the living dead and you!

See yonder tree beside the field, caught in the sudden sough,
How conscious of its strength it leans, how straight and steadfast now!
If Lincoln bends (for all, through him, my vote I mean to cast)—
What winds have blown! what storms he 's known! the hickory 's straight at last!

NOVEMBER, 1864.

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LAND IN CLOUD.

Above the sunken sun the clouds are fired
With a dark splendor: the enchanted hour
Works momentary miracles in the sky;
Weird shadows take from fancy what they lack
For semblance, and I see a boundless plain,
A mist of sun and sheaves in boundless air,
Gigantic shapes of Reapers moving slow
In some new harvest: so I can but dream
Of my great Land, that takes its Morning star
Out of the dusky Evening of the East,
My Land, that lifted into vision gleams
Misty and vast, a boundless plain afar,
(Like yonder fading fantasy of cloud,)
With shadowy Reapers moving, vague and slow,
In some wide harvest of the days to be—
A mist of sun and sheaves in boundless air!

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SUNSHINE AND FIRELIGHT.

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ROSE AND ROOT.

A FABLE OF TWO LIVES.

THE Rose aloft in sunny air,
  Beloved alike by bird and bee,
Takes for the dark Root little care,
  That toils below it ceaselessly.

I put my question to the flower:
  "Pride of the Summer, garden-queen,
Why livest thou thy little hour?"
  And the Rose answer'd, "I am seen."

I put my question to the Root—
  "I mine the earth content," it said,
"A hidden mĭner underfoot;
  I know a Rose is overhead."

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THE SUNSHINE OF SHADOWS.

ON A PHOTOGRAPH OF THREE CHILDREN.

THREE children's shadow-faces look
From my familiar picture-book:
Far from their father's threshold sweet
I found them in a noisy street.

"Dear children, come with me," I said,
"And make my home your own instead;
Your gentle looks, your tender words,
Shall mate the sunbeams, charm the birds."

They came, but never lip is stirr'd
With merry laugh or mirthful word:
As in a trance at me they look
Whene'er I ope their prisoning book.

But as I gaze, in revery bound,
The silence overflows with sound:

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From garden haunts of birds and bees
Hum voices through the blossoming trees.

Like waters heard when breezes blow,
Light laughters waver to and fro;
Then, when my dream is gone, I say
"Some wind has blown the sound away."

For the light breeze, alighting brief,
Turns with its sudden wings the leaf,
And, like a passing sunshine, they
Seem so to shout and fly away!

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HIGHER TENANTS.

After Winter fires were ended, and the last spark, vanishing
From the embers on our hearthstone, flew into the sky of spring:

In the night-time, in the morning—when the air was hush'd around—
Throbbing vaguely on the silence, came a dull, mysterious sound:

Like the sultry hum of thunder, at the sullen close of day,
Out of clouds that brood and threaten on the horizon far away.

"'T is," I said, "the April thunder," and I thought of flowers that spring,
And of trees that stand in blossom, and of birds that fly and sing.

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But the sound, repeated often—nearer, more familiar grown—
From our chimney seem'd descending, and the swallow's wings were known.

Where the lithe flames leap'd and lighten'd, charm of host and cheer of guest,
There the emigrant of Summer chose its homestead, built its nest.

Then I dream'd of poets dwelling, like the swallow, long ago,
Overhead in dusky places ere their songs were heard below;

Overhead in humble attics, ministers of higher things:
Underneath were busy people, overhead were heavenly wings!

And I thought of homely proverbs that on simple lips had birth,
Born of gentle superstitions at old firesides of the earth:

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How, where'er the swallow builded under human
roofs its nest,
Something holier, purer, higher, in the house became
a guest;

Peace, or Love, or Health, or Fortune—something
Prosperous, from the air
'Lighting with the wings of swallows, breathed
divine possession there.

"Friendly gods," I said, "descending, make their
gentler visits so,
Fill the air with benedictions—songs above and
songs below!"

Then I murmur'd, "Welcome, swallow; I, your land-
lord, stand content:
Even if song were not sufficient, higher Tenants pay
your rent!"

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NEW GRASS.

Along the sultry city street,
Faint subtile breaths of fragrance meet
Me, wandering unaware
(In April warmth, while yet the sun
For Spring no constant place has won)
By many a vacant square.

Whoever reads these lines has felt
That breath whose long-lost perfumes melt
The spirit—newly found
While the sweet, banished families
Of earth's forgotten sympathies
Rise from the sweating ground.

It is the subtile breath of grass;
And as I pause, or lingering pass,
With half-shut eyes, behold!
Bright from old baptisms of dew
Fresh meadows burst upon my view,
And new becomes the old!

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Old longings (Pleasure kissing Pain),
Old visions visit me again—
Life's quiet deeps are stirr'd:
The fountain-heads of memory flow
Through channels dry so long ago,
With music long unheard.

I think of pastures, evermore
Greener than any hour before,
Where cattle wander slow,
Large-uddered in the sun, or chew
The cud content in shadows new,
Or, shadows, homeward low.

I dream of prairies dear to me:
Afar in town I seem to see
Their widening miles arise,
Where, like the butterfly anear,
Far off in sunny mist the deer,
That seems no larger, flies.

Thy rural lanes, Ohio, come
Back to me, grateful with the hum
Of every thing that stirs:
Dear places, sadden'd by the years,
Lost to my sight send sudden tears,
Their secret messengers.

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I think of paths a-swarm with wings
Of bird and bee—all lovely things
From sun or sunny clod;
Of play-grounds where the children play,
And fear not Time will come to-day,
And feel the warming sod.

New grass: it grows by cottage doors,
In orchards hush'd with bloom, by shores
Of streams that flow as green,
On hill-slopes white with tents or sheep,
And where the sacred mosses keep
The holy dead unseen.

It grows o'er distant graves I know—
Sweet grass! above them greener grow,
And guard them tenderly!
My brother's, not three summers green;
My sister's—new-made, only seen
Through far-off tears by me!

It grows on battle-fields—alas!
Old battle-fields are lost in grass;
New battles wait the new:
Hark, is it the living warmth I hear?
The cannon far or bee anear?
The bee and cannon too!

WASHINGTON, April, 1863.

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OUTGOING.

A WRATHFUL dust, the spirit of the town,
Follows me, loth to let me free, until
I come to this close lane whose gateway leads
From the low, heated city to the peace,
The high domestic quiet, of the hills.
It is a narrow lane (on either side
A wall: the left of trees—the right of stone,
Roof'd with a hedge) and hides me from the dust
That like a baffled hunter flies beyond,
And welcomes me caressingly with airs
Breathed from a myriad things that hold the breath
Of Summer—weeds that blossom, thorns that flower;
And blesses me with dear and gentle sounds,
(That, mingled, make but quiet felt the more,)
And dewy sights that, seen however oft,
Make the eye always new and can not tire.

At the cool opening of this guardless lane
I think the tender Mother whom I love,

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Awaiting, whispers with her brooding voice—
Her single, gentle voice that is not heard
By the deaf ear but in the hearkening heart—
"Welcome, O child come back! for all the day
I long'd for thee, my child, and all the day
I dream'd thee lost in yonder barren town,
And sent my messengers to call for thee.
Didst thou not hear a bird beside thy pane
A tender moment—hear but hardly hear?
Didst thou not see a bee that came and went,
Striking thy window—see but hardly see?
Didst thou not feel a wind that turn'd thy page,
Intruding, playful, like a timid child
That fears repulses—feel but hardly feel?
Vexed by the flying leaf, thy blessing held
The breeze that linger'd, but thou didst not come.
I fear for thee, too long in yonder town,
For they forget me there—and wilt not thou?
But see my welcome; see my open door."
So with the dear rebuke I enter in.

The trees in sunset tremble goldenly
Through all their leaves. I wander gladly down
Over a bridge across a troubled rill
(Fluttering from its dark with frighten'd wings);

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Beyond, the roadway climbs around the hight,
And, look! beneath me, with a music heard
Best in the heart of silence far away,
A falling fleece of silver, shines the dam:
Above, the quiet mirror lets the duck
Float, brooding on its shadow, motionless;
Below, the shallows glitter every-where
As if with shoals of hurrying fish that leap
Over each other noisily in the sun;
And, farther down, the greenly-hidden race
Persuades the seeking eye to wander where,
Gray through the boughs of sycamore and elm,
Tremulous with its myriad-moving wheels,
With sullen thunder stands the busy mill.
While over all, through azure haze adust,
Show the thick spires and the bronz'd marble dome,
Transfigured, far-off, for my memory,
Made beautiful for my forgetfulness.

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THE BLACKBERRY FARM.

Nature gives with freëst hands
Richest gifts to poorest lands:
When the lord has sown his last
And his field 's to desert pass'd,
She begins to claim her own,
And—instead of harvests flown,
Sunburnt sheaves and golden ears—
Sends her hardier pioneers;
Barbarous brambles, outlaw'd seeds,
The first families of weeds
Fearing neither sun nor wind,
With the flowers of their kind
(Outcasts of the garden-bound),
Colonize the expended ground,
Using (none her right gainsay)
Confiscations of decay:
Thus she clothes the barren place,
Old disgrace, with newer grace.
Title-deeds, which cover lands
Ruled and reap'd by buried hands,

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She—disowning owners old,
Scorning their "to have and hold"—
Takes herself; the mouldering fence
Hides with her munificence;
O'er the crumbled gatepost twines
Her proprietary vines;
On the doorstep of the house
Writes in moss "Anonymous,"
And, that beast and bird may see,
"This is Public property;"
To the bramble makes the sun
Bearer of profusion:
Blossom-odors breathe in June
Promise of her later boon,
And in August's brazen heat
Grows the prophecy complete—
Lo, her largess glistens bright,
Blackness diamonded with light!
Then, behold, she welcomes all
To her annual festival:
"Mine the fruit but yours as well,"
Speaks the Mother Miracle;
"Rich and poor are welcome; come,
Make to-day millennium
In my garden of the sun:
Black and white to me are one.

RETURN TO NEW ENGLAND

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This my freehold use content—
Here no landlord rides for rent;
I proclaim my jubilee,
In my Black Republic, free.
Come," she beckons; "Enter, through
Gates of gossamer, doors of dew
(Lit with Summer's tropic fire),
My Liberia of the brier."

GEORGETOWN HEIGHTS, July, 1863.

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THE MORNING STREET.

Alone I walk the Morning Street,
Fill'd with the silence vague and sweet:
All seems as strange, as still, as dead
As if unnumber'd years had fled,
Letting the noisy Babel lie
Breathless and dumb against the sky;
The light wind walks with me alone
Where the hot day flame-like was blown,
Where the wheels roar'd, the dust was beat:
The dew is in the Morning Street.

Where are the restless throngs that pour
Along this mighty corridor
While the noon shines?—the hurrying crowd
Whose footsteps make the city loud—
The myriad faces—hearts that beat
No more in the deserted street?
Those footsteps in their dreaming maze
Cross thresholds of forgotten days;
Those faces brighten from the years

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In rising suns long set in tears;
Those hearts—far in the Past they beat,
Unheard within the Morning Street.

A city of the world's gray prime,
Lost in some desert far from Time,
Where noiseless ages, gliding through,
Have only sifted sand and dew—
Yet a mysterious hand of man
Lying on all the haunted plan,
The passions of the human heart
Quickening the marble breast of Art—
Were not more strange to one who first
Upon its ghostly silence burst
Than this vast quiet where the tide
Of Life, upheav'd on either side,
Hangs trembling, ready soon to beat
With human waves the Morning Street.

Ay, soon the glowing morning flood
Breaks through the charméd solitude:
This silent stone, to music won,
Shall murmur to the rising sun;
The busy place, in dust and heat,
Shall rush with wheels and swarm with feet;

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The Arachné-threads of Purpose stream
Unseen within the morning gleam;
The life shall move, the death be plain;
The bridal throng, the funeral train,
Together, face to face shall meet
And pass within the Morning Street.

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THE LOST HORIZON.

I stood at evening in the crimson air:
The trees shook off their dusky twilight glow;
The wind took up old burdens of despair,
And moan'd like Atlas with his world of woe.

Like the great circle of a bronzed ring,
That clasp'd the vision of the vanish'd day,
I saw the vague horizon vanishing
Around me into darkness, far away.

Then, while the night came fast with cloudy roar,
Lo, all about me, rays of hearths unknown
Sprang from the gloom with light unseen before,
And made a warm horizon of their own.

I sigh'd: "The wanderer in the desert sees
Strange ghosts of summer lands arising, sweet
With restless waters, green with gracious trees
Whose shadows beckon welcome to his feet.

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"For erst, where now the desert far away
Stretches a wilderness of hopeless sand,
Clasping fair fields and sunburnt harvests lay
The heavenly girdles of a fruitful land."

I thought of a sweet mirage now no more:
Warm windows radiant with a dancing flame—
Dear voices heard within a happy door—
A face that to the darkness, lighted, came.

No hearth of mine was waiting, near or far;
No threshold for my coming footstep yearn'd
To touch its slumber; no warm window star,
The tender Venus, to my longing burn'd.

The darken'd windows slowly lost their fire,
But shimmer'd with the ghostly ember-light:
A wanderer, with old embers of desire,
The lost horizon held me in the night.

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ANTAEUS.

AWEARY of the restless will to know
Invisible heights, which men have sigh'd to reach,
And walk the deep sea, without faith, alone,
I thought of that lithe wrestler, born of Earth,
Who strove with him the hydra's conqueror,
Losing and winning. Lifted into air
He swoon'd defeated: touching then the sod,
His blood sprang full of wings and he arose,
The heaving pulses of the hills his own,
The sinews of the deserts in his thighs.
And, when I fell asleep at middle night,
My thought becoming portion of my sleep,
I wander'd into Libyan solitudes
(For so a dream confuses place and time)
And to me spake the giant of the Waste:
"I am Antaeus, darling of the Earth.
Whatever makes me stronger, man, is thine;
I am a man, but these ungirded arms,
Forever striving, writhe forever more,
Wrestling with gods and godlike challengers.
Born of the Earth, I cling to her for strength,

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Her life is mine and mine is hers forever;
I feel my thews alone when standing fast,
A brother of the mountains, at their feet,
And dare to know my conquerors: they dwell
Aloft in myriad shapes and essences;
Sometimes they wait and seize me, unaware,
In whirlwinds of white frenzy, and I fall
Weak as a leaf whose last breath is gone out
In the first breath of Autumn: waking, then,
(Like one who, falling, wakens from his dream,)
I see a wingéd giant near the sun.
I know my place, my victors know their own:
Theirs the invisible Æther, mine below
Where the Earth breathes her breath, a breath of Life,
And if perchance I clasp them in my arms
Victorious here, I claim them as my own,
Servants of men and wingéd messengers.
"I am Antaeus, darling of the Earth,
Wrestler with gods and godlike challengers,
But, oftentimes, aweary of my strife,
And of the clasp of those invisible arms,
Ready to catch and lift me up in swoon,
The death-in-life that I alone can know,
And weary of the wrestlers coming still
With challenges in the air, for rest I turn

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To the dear bosom of my Mother Earth:
She, like a mother, holds me near her heart;
She, like a mother, kisses me asleep
On loving pillows hush'd for harmless dreams;
She, like a mother, with a mother's voice
At morning wakens me. Dear Mother Earth,
Dearest and tenderest Mother, quick with love,
Throbbing with vigor, full of gentleness,
I give myself to thee, and thou dost give
Thyself to me again; thy weary child,
Asleep upon thy bosom, wakens strong,
For thou awakest in my heart anew,
Rising immortal in my mortal strength."
It was a voice and pass'd, as voices pass
From dreams but leave a wake of sound—a form
And vanish'd, leaving something for the sight,
Shadowy and vast, the shadow of a shade;
And I awoke, and o'er my head a vine
Bronzed with an early splendor, to and fro
A playful breeze within my window caught;
I heard the noise of morning; far away
I saw a ploughman, and a sower near
Dropp'd corn into his furrows, trusting still
All golden promises of growing gain;
And when I walk'd abroad my shadow made
A giant's bulk, my sunburnt breast beat full

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Of the great blood which moved in giants' veins
When, as we speak, the Earth itself was young;
And, while I saw an engine drag its world,
And watch'd an eagle in his azure deeps,
I smiled at the vague medley of my dream,
But said, "I am Antaeus, born of Earth,
Her chosen wrestler; lifted into air
I swoon defeated: touching then the sod,
My blood springs full of wings and I am strong."

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ONE OF TWO.

Listen and look! If you listen, you see
A nest with a bird in yonder tree:
Above, in the leaves that glitter with May,
The little half-owner is singing to-day:
"We are very proud, we are rich, and bless'd—
Come and look, if you please, at our nest."

Listen and look! If you look, you hear
The sweetest song you have heard for a year:
Over the nest on the tremulous spray
The little half-owner is singing to-day:
"Soon, in the nest I have asked you to see,
Listen and look for our family!"

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THE OLD MAN AND THE SPRING-LEAVES

UNDERNEATH the beechen tree
All things fall in love with me!
Birds, that sing so sweetly, sung
Ne'er more sweet when I was young;
Some sweet breeze, I *will* not see,
Steals to kiss me lovingly;
All the leaves, so blithe and bright,
Dancing sing in Maying light
Over me: "At last, at last,
He has stolen from the Past."

Wherefore, leaves, so gladly mad?
I am rather sad than glad.

"He is the merry child that play'd
Underneath our beechen shade,
Years ago; whom all things bright
Gladden'd, glad with his delight!"

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I am not the child that play'd
Underneath your beechen shade;
I am not the boy ye sung
Songs to, in lost fairy-tongue.
He read fairy dreams below,
Legends leaves and flowers must know;
He dream'd fairy dreams, and ye
Changed to fairies, in your glee
Dancing, singing from the tree;
And, awaken'd, fairy-land
Circled childhood's magic wand!
Joy swell'd his heart, joy kiss'd his brow;
I am following funerals now.
Fairy shores from Time depart;
Lost horizons flush my heart.
I am not the child that play'd
Underneath your beechen shade.

"'T is the merry child that play'd
Underneath our beechen shade
Years ago; whom all things bright
Loved, made glad with his delight!"

Ah! the bright leaves will not know
That an old man dreams below!

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No; they will not hear nor see,
Clapping their hands at finding me,
Singing, dancing from their tree!
Ah! their happy voices steal
Time away: again I feel,
While they sing to me apart,
The lost child come in my heart:
In the enchantment of the Past,
The old man is the child at last!

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THE MASTER-KEY.

Lo! in my lifted hand a little Key:
What matter if of iron or of gold,
My simplest gift, my greatest gift, you see;
My life, Beloved, when it is given you hold.

Enter whene'er you choose: at vesper chime,
Or when the dewy lips of midnight, dumb,
Kiss the dumb world. Behold, at morning's prime
My doors are open, and the many come.

The many come—it matters little who:
I guard the place and welcome, evermore.
My sacred chambers, never closed to you,
Are closed for them: I keep the outer door.

Enter whene'er you will, for every room
Is yours in being mine. To you unknown,
This Key knows outward porch and inner gloom,
Each sky-ward stair, each closet dim and lone.

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Dance in the echoing halls, Beloved, and sing
Away your heart to every echo sweet
(The echoes, too, are mine), with flitting wing
Of buoyant joy and scarce-alighting feet.

The lighted walls shall answer your delight,
With floating shapes and summer dreams of Art:
The Undine springing from her fountain bright,
The lithe Bacchanté with her panting heart.

Dream in the purple glooms, for dreaming made,
Where the white angel holds the lily white
Against her marble bosom (in the shade
Her wings forgotten), watching day and night.

What though at times along the floors—unknown,
Unheard by others—echo phantom feet,
Weird faces start from veils, faint voices moan?
Know Life and Death in every passage meet.

Open the chambers where the unburied dead,
While Memory there forever wakeful stands,
Show their thin ghostly radiance not yet fled—
Pure breathless faces, tender folded hands.

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Around the death-beds, hush'd, familiar go,
And kiss for me the dear familiar clay,
While the dark funeral tapers waver slow
And the old death-watch is renew'd for aye.

Walk in my secret chapel when you will:
Lo! Visions come adown some unseen stair;
Sometimes high voices all the silence fill,
And St. Cecilia's soul is in the air.

Fear not: the angel with the lily white
There watches, too, as in the dreaming place,
With wings uplifted in mysterious light
And some white morning on her lifted face.

Enter, whene'er you choose, whatever door:
This Key will open, night and day, the whole.
Be Love with you, your guardian evermore;
Fear nothing. Take the Master of my Soul.

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PARTING.

We clasp our hands: we turn and go,
Our footsteps echoing years between;
We meet again: we hardly know
These ghosts of loved ones long unseen.

We clasp our hands: we turn and go,
Far travellers with strange hours and years;
The face, the form, the voice we know,
They come not back from time and tears.

We clasp our hands in loving trust;
We send our voices o'er the wave:
No hand can reach us—from the dust;
No voice can find us—in the grave.

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THE MONK'S VISION OF CHRIST.

Behold, unto a monk the vision grew
Of Him who waits for all, his loving Lord,
Him who, all-suffering, all patience knew,
And wore the crown of Hate for Love's reward.

The perfect vision of most holy light,
The Guest of man, unto His follower dear,
Gave (He who gave the blind his mortal sight)—
Immortal light to see his Master near.

Long gazed the monk; his rapture grew the more:
The Sight remained, nor grew his soul content,
Till in his heart a message from the poor,
Fed by his bounty, whisper'd, and he went.

His duty called, Christ's own belovéd care,
While, in his room, Christ seem'd himself to stay;
But Christ was in his heart: so, keeping there
The vision sweet, he walk'd his Master's way.

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He walked His Way, fulfilling, as he went,
His Master's word and unforgotten will:
Returning—heaven-rewarded, self-content—
Lo, the dear vision waited for him still!

"Thy Will be done," in many a prayer before
His heart had lifted. Lo, the Vision said
(His Will being done who visits still the poor)
Lowly: "Hadst thou remain'd, I must have fled."

Digitized by Google

THE FIRST FIRE.

Dearest, to-night upon our Hearth
  See the first fire of Autumn leap:
Oh, first that we with festal Mirth
  For loving Memory keep!
Sweet Fairy of the Fireside, come
And guard our altar-flame of Home!

Without, October breathes the night—
  Cold dews below, cold stars on high;
The chilly cricket sees our light
  Reach welcoming arms anigh,
And sighs to sing his evening song
In our warm air the winter long.

Blithe cricket! welcome, singing, here!
  I half-recall dead Autumns cold,
With half-shut eyelids dream, my dear,
  Their sadness vague and old:
Ha! the lithe flame leaps red, and tries
With bursting sparks to blind my eyes!

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Ill-timed the gay conceit, I know:
  On the dark hills that near us lie
(The Shadow will not, need not, go)
  Beneath the Autumnal sky
Stand battle-tents, that, everywhere,
Keep ghostly white the moonless air.

The sentinel walks his lonely beat,
  The soldier slumbers on the ground:
To one hearth-glimmers far are sweet,
  One dreams of fireside sound!
From unforgotten doors they reach,
Dear sympathies, as dear as speech.

I think of all the homeless woe,
  The battle-winter long;
Alas, the world——the hearth's aglow!
  And, hark! the cricket's song
Within!—the Fairy's minstrel sings
Away the ghosts of saddest things!

The firelight strikes our walls to bloom—
  Home's tender warmth in flower, I deem;
And look, the pictures in the room
  Shine in the restless gleam—
Dear, humble fancies of the heart
When Art was Love in love with Art:

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The Torrent lost in rainbow spray;
  The Flock (its shepherdess the moon)
Asleep; the Laureate-Lark of Day
  At home some even in June;
The Window, wide for beam and bee:
A dove within—without, the sea!

A Cottage in a summer land,
  With one whose shadow walks before:
Snow-peaks afar in sunset stand—
  Vines flutter at the door,
Half-hiding in a sunlit place,
But cannot hide, a sunlit face;

The Mother, with her arms about
  Her baby kiss'd from evening sleep—
Still rocks the cradle: laugh and shout
  Within her bosom keep
Glad echoes—on her drooping hair
A sunbeam, 'lighting, lingers there;

The Angel visiting her Child,
  Hovering with a yearning grace,
Flush'd by the firelight, sweetly mild,
  A mother's brooding face:
Her wings (the boy has dreaming eyes)
Show that she came from Paradise!

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Blithe dance the flames and blest are we!
Without, the funeral of the year
Is preach'd by every mournful tree;
The tree in blossom here
Knows no lost leaves, no vanish'd wing—
In vain will Autumn preach to Spring!

The cricket sings. His song? You know:
Warm prophecies of dearest days—
(Horizons lost of long ago
Crumble within the blaze!)
Of nights aglow with lights that bless
And wine from Home's enchanted press.

The cricket sings; and, as I dream,
Your face shows tender smile and tear—
What angels of the hearth, a-gleam,
Wingless, have lighted here?
Sing, cricket, sing of these to-night—
The First Fire of our Home is bright!

GEORGETOWN, D. C., October, 1861.

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TAKING THE NIGHT-TRAIN.

A TREMULOUS word, a lingering hand, the burning
  Of restless passion smouldering—so we part:
Ah, slowly from the dark the world is turning
  When midnight stars shine in a heavy heart.

The streets are lighted, and the myriad faces
  Move through the gaslight, and the homesick feet
Pass by me, homeless; sweet and close embraces
  Charm many a threshold—laughs and kisses sweet.

From great hotels the stranger throng is streaming,
  The hurrying wheels in many a street are loud;
Within the depot, in the gaslight gleaming,
  A glare of faces, stands the waiting crowd.

The whistle screams; the wheels are rumbling slowly,
  The path before us glides into the light:
Behind, the city sinks in silence wholly;
  The panting engine leaps into the night.

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I seem to see each street a mystery growing,
In mist of dreamland—vague, forgotten air:
Does no sweet soul, awaking, feel me going?
Loves no dear heart, in dreams, to keep me there?

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LEAVES AT MY WINDOW.

I WATCH the leaves that flutter in the wind,
Bathing my eyes with coolness and my heart
Filling with springs of grateful sense anew,
Before my window—in the sun and rain.
And now the wind is gone and now the rain,
And all a motionless moment breathe, and now
Playful the wind comes back—again the shower,
Again the sunshine! Like a golden swarm
Of butterflies the leaves are fluttering,
The leaves are dancing, singing—all alive
(For Fancy gives her breath to every leaf)
For the blithe moment. Beautiful to me,
Of all inanimate things most beautiful,
And dear as flowers their kindred, are the leaves
In all their summer life; and, when a child,
I loved to lie through sunny afternoons
With half-shut eyes (familiar eyes with things
Long unfamiliar, knowing Fairyland
And all the unhidden mysteries of the Earth)
Using my kinship in those earlier days
With Nature and the humbler people, dear

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To her green life, in every shade and sun.
The leaves had myriad voices, and their joy
One with the birds' that sang among them seem'd;
And, oftentimes, I lay in breezy shade
Till, creeping with the loving stealth he takes
In healthy temperaments, the blesséd Sleep
(Thrice blesséd and thrice-blessing now, because
Of sleepless things that will not give us rest)
Came with his weird processions—dreams that wore
All happy masks—blithe fairies numberless,
Forever passing, never more to pass,
The Spirits of the Leaves. Awaking then,
Behold the sun was swimming in my face
Through mists of his creations, swarming gold,
And all the leaves in sultry languor lay
Above me, for I waken'd when they dropp'd
Asleep, unmoving. Now, when Time has ceased
His holiday, and I am prison'd close
In his harsh service, master'd by his Hours,
The leaves have not forgotten me: behold,
They play with me like children who, awake,
Find one most dear asleep and waken him
To their own gladness from his sultry dream;
But nothing sweeter do they give to me

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Than thoughts of one who, far away, perchance
Watches like me the leaves and thinks of me
While o'er her window, sunnily, the shower
Touches all boughs to music, and the rose
Beneath swings lovingly toward the pane,
And She, whom Nature gave the freshest sense
For all her delicate life, rejoices in
The joy of birds that use the sun to sing
With breasts o'er-full of music. "Little Birds,"
She sings, "Sing to my little Bird below!"
And with her child-like fancy, half-belief,
She hears them sing and makes-believe they obey,
And the child, wakening, listens motionless.

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CHARITY AT HOME.

Two children stand, with dimpled cheek and chin,
Pressing their loving foreheads to the pane
To see the forest black in twilight rain,
But only see their happy walls within,
Winking in firelight, wavering rosy-warm,
While rush without, roaring, the wings of storm.

So, often, we who in charm'd circles stand,
Where the good Fairy, Fortune, smiling brings
God's transient gifts with ever-gracious wings,
Behold the world in her closed Fairyland:
For, warm within, from our sweet rooms we gaze
Into the dark, and see—our Fireside-blaze!

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MARIAN'S FIRST HALF-YEAR.

Maiden Marian, born in May,
When the earth with flowers was gay,
And the Hours by day and night
Wore the jewels of delight:
Half-a-year has vanish'd by
Like a wondrous pageantry—
Mother May with fairy flowers,
June with dancing leaf-crown'd Hours,
July red with harvest-rust,
Swarthy August white with dust,
Mild September clothed in gold,
Wise October, hermit old—
And the world, so new and strange,
Circled you in olden change,
Since the miracle-morn of birth
Made your May-day on the earth.
Half-a-year, sweet child, has brought
To your eyes the soul of thought;
To your lips, with cries so dumb,
Baby-syllables have come,

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Dreams of fairy language known
To your mother's heart alone—
Anté-Hebrew words complete
(To old Noah obsolete);
You have learn'd expressions strange,
Miracles of facial change,
Winning gestures, supplications,
Stamp'd entreaties, exhortations—
Oratory eloquent
Where no more is said than meant;
You have lived philosophies
Older far than Socrates—
Holiest life you've understood
Better than oldest wise and good:
Such as erst in Eden's light
Shunn'd not God's nor angels' sight;
You have caught with subtler eyes
Close Pythagorean ties
In the bird and in the tree,
And in every thing you see;
You have found and practise well
(Moulding life of principle)
Epicurean doctrines old
Of the Hour's fruit of gold:
Lifted, Moses-like, you stand,
Looking, where the Promised Land

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Dazzles far away your sight—
Milk-and-honey's your delight!
  Maiden Marian, born in May,
Half-a-year has pass'd away;
Half-a-year of cannon-pealing,
('T was your era of good feeling,)
You have scarce heard dreader sound
Than those privateers around,
Buzzing flies, a busy brood,
Lovers of sweet babyhood—
Than the hum of lullaby
Rock'd to dreamland tenderly;
Half-a-year of dreadest sights
Through bright days and fairy nights,
You have seen no dreader thing
Than the marvel of a wing,
Than the leaves whose shadows warm
Play'd in many a phantom swarm
On the floor, the table under,
Lighting your small face with wonder!
  Maiden Marian, born in May,
Half-a-year has pass'd away:
'Tis a dark November day;
Lifted by our window, lo!
Washington is whirl'd in snow!
But, within, the fluttering flame

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Keeps you summer-warm the same,
And your mother (while I write),
Crimson'd by the ember light,
Murmurs sweeter things to you
Than I'd write a half-year through:
Baby-lyrics, lost to art,
Found within a mother's heart.
  Maiden Marian, born in May,
I'll not question Time to-day
For the mysteries of your morrows,
Girlhood's joys or woman's sorrows,
But (while—side by side, alone—
We recall your summer flown,
And, with eyes that cannot look,
Hold his claspéd Mystery-Book)
I will trust when May is here
He shall measure you a year,
With another half-year sweet
Make the ring of light complete:
We will date our New-Years thence,
Full of summer songs and sense—
All the years begun that day
Shall be born and die in May!

NOVEMBER 7, 1862.

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FIRELIGHT ABROAD.

WHILE the wide twilight hushes every thing,
And the unrisen moon's low mystery
Reddens the snow with smother'd Eastern fire,
And, issuing suddenly and bright from heaven,
Hangs yonder star and flutters, look, as bright,
Starting from their close heavens, one by one,
The stars that bless the ended day with peace
Shine steadfastly—the gentler stars of Home!

As one who, thoughtful, gazing at a star,
Marvels what lovelier uplifted lives
Are bound and dwell within its shining air,
By my lone casement so I love to watch
That halo of the fireside shed abroad
Into the world—Home's holy breath of light—
Dreaming of spirits in its inner glow.

There the young bride alights from charméd air
Into the real air, enchanted still,

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Breathing a bower of roses evermore
Over her husband's dusty week-day toil—
Within the harvest lightening the sheaves,
The forge's hammer. There the mother smiles
Her patient days away in daily love,
With gentle lips and tender-touching hands.
There her blithe children, asking for her knees,
(Illumined by the climbing, dancing blaze,)
Cling warm forever, though the years have swept
Even the last spark in ashes, long ago,
From the dear hearthstone, in quick winds of change;
There play their dreams and, lisping dream-like prayers,
Send them to Heaven and sleep at Heaven's door.
And there the old, remembering (they who seem
Like helpless trees of some strong forest gone,)
Watch the white ashes crumble from the flame.

If angels come from Heaven to our dim earth,
Thither they come, close visitors unseen,
To find their mortal kindred—as of old—
Troubled and sadden'd at their empty air;
And the three angels born in human hearts—
One playing hide-and-seek, a fickle child;
One, the strong blind believer close to God,

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Whispering, through all darkness, "I have light;"
And she, the gentle Warmer of the hearth,
Kindling a flame where the last ember flies—
There in the firelight have their dwelling-place.

The fireside! O, a warm breath fills the name!
The world's first good, the earth's last happiness,
Circle that warmth and breathe that sacred air,
The atmosphere of those soft lights of Home!
We climb for fame, we walk in mountain paths,
But there's a cottage down in yonder vale:
Through the long strife, the storm to take the hour,
Comes the cool wind from the green pathway thither;
Through the white-heated dust a sudden breath
Of the one rose that guards the happy gate;
From the jarr'd street the ever-opening door!

Oh, there we warm our hearts when life is cold,
With memory of days that warm no more!
Circling the firelight from all exile lands,
The anchor that no wind can drift away
Still draws us back. One fireside lights the world!

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A LOST GRAVEYARD

NEAR by, a soundless road is seen, o'ergrown with grass and brier;
Far off, the highway's signal flies—a hurrying dust of fire.

But here, among forgotten graves, in June's delicious breath,
I linger where the living loved to dream of lovely death.

Worn letters, lit with heavenward thought, these crumbled headstones wear;
Fresh flowers (old epitaphs of Love) are fragrant here and there.

Years, years ago, these graves were made—no mourners come to-day:
Their footsteps vanish'd, one by one, moving the other way.

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Through the loud world they walk, or lie—like those
here left at rest—
With two long-folded useless arms on each forgotten
breast.

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AT EVENING.

HARK, out of all the neighboring forest hum
The mingled voices of a myriad things,
(A Sound that half is Silence listening)—
Birds, insects loud with summer, brooks that creep
Slow through the dark and flutter in the light
(As if with prison'd wings) and hurry on,
And the low, lazy turning evermore
Of restless leaves unnumber'd, half-asleep
And yet unsleeping. These, while twilight breathes
Great stealthy veils of silence over all,
Feed my old indolence with newer food,
Till, all forgetful of the hour, I see,
Winking above a western cloud, the star
Beloved by lovers and the lover's friend,
And, underneath the boughs and far and near,
The fireflies climbing into dusky air,
Lifting their million stars from grass and weed
Wet with the dew; meanwhile the stars on high
Start one by one—from cells invisible—

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Visible in the darkness suddenly,
Cotemporaries of the dreamy hour.
Oh, dear to me the coming forth of stars!
After the trivial tumults of the day
They fill the heaven, they hush the earth with awe,
And, when my life is fretted pettily
With transient nothings, it is good, I deem,
From darkling windows to look forth and gaze
At this new blossoming of Eternity
'Twixt each To-morrow and each dead To-day,
Or else with solemn footsteps modulate
To spheral music wander forth and know
Their radiant individualities
And feel their presence newly, hear again
The silence that is God's voice speaking, slow
In starry syllables, for evermore.

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THE UNHEARD BELL.

Somewhere a Bell speaks, deep and slow,
The ancient monotone of woe:
A child within a garden bright,
The Paradise of morning light,
Hears fountain-laughter, songs of birds,
And teaches Echo mirthful words.

Somewhere a Bell speaks, deep and slow,
The ancient monotone of woe:
A youth in an enchanted grove
Hears maidens singing lays of love;
Restless he seeks them all the day,
To crown the loveliest Queen of May.

Somewhere a Bell speaks, deep and slow,
The ancient monotone of woe:
A man, in streets of dust and heat,
Hears the wide sound of busy feet,
The great world's moving, ceaselessly;
And dusk sails whiten far at sea.

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Somewhere a Bell speaks, deep and slow,
The ancient monotone of woe:
An old man—deaf to wingéd song,
To maiden voice, or moving throng—
Hears not within his hearse the knell,
The black procession of the Bell.

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THE DARK STREET.

O WEARY feet that fill the nightly air!
No hearts I hear, no faces see above—
I feel your single yearning, everywhere,
Moving the way of Love!

Forever crowding weary, one by one
Ye pass no more through all the shadowy air;
The footsteps cease on thresholds dearly lone—
The hearts, the faces there!

There all the voices of the heart arise,
Unheard along the darkling street before;
The faces light their loving lips and eyes—
The footsteps are no more!

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QUATRAINS.

THE MICROSCOPE AND TELESCOPE.

Look down into the Microscope, and know
The boundless wonder in the hidden small;
Look up into the Telescope, and, lo!
The hidden greatness in the boundless all!

A DIAL AT A GRAVE.

To number sunny hours by shadows, why
Is here the dial shown,
Where from the Sunshine of Eternity
The Shadow, Time, is flown?

THE HIPPOGRIFF.

Spurn not Life's calls—though seeking higher things—
Earth's loving fires for the celestial levin:
The hippogriff has feet as well as wings,
For highways of the world and paths of heaven.

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QUATRAINS.

TO THE SUN.

Flower-wakener, that wakest the spheres in light.
I worship thee alike in joy or sorrow:
Thou leavest behind thee the Eternal Night,
Thou bear'st before thee the Eternal Morrow.

FOR———, A POET.

To own a quarry proves no call of Art—
'T is Nature's store you cannot keep nor give,
If at your touch the masses will not start,
Radiant processions, shapes that breathe and live!

TORCH-LIGHT IN FALL-TIME.

I lift this sumach-bough with crimson flare
And, touch'd with subtle pangs of dreamy pain,
Through the dark wood a torch I seem to bear
In Autumn's funeral train.

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THE GOLDEN HAND.

Lo, from the city's heat and dust
A Golden Hand forever thrust,
Uplifting from a spire on high
A shining finger in the sky!

I see it when the morning brings
Fresh tides of life to living things,
And the great world awakes: behold,
That lifted Hand in morning gold!

I see it when the noontide beats
Pulses of fire in busy streets;
The dust flies in the flaming air:
Above, that quiet Hand is there.

I see it when the twilight clings
To the dark earth with hovering wings:
Flashing with the last fluttering ray,
That Golden Hand remembers day.

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The midnight comes—the holy hour;
The city like a giant flower
Sleeps full of dew: that Hand, in light
Of moon and stars, how weirdly bright!

Below, in many a noisy street
Are toiling hands and striving feet;
The weakest rise, the strongest fall:
That equal Hand is over all.

Below, in courts to guard the land,
Gold buys the tongue and binds the hand:
Stealing in God's great scales the gold,
That awful Hand, above, behold!

Below, the Sabbaths walk serene
With the great dust of Days between;
Preachers within their pulpits stand:
See, over all, that heavenly Hand!

But the hot dust, in crowded air
Below, arises never there:
O speech of one who cannot speak!
O Sabbath-witness of the Week!

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THE GRAVE-ANGEL.

In the moonlight, on the tombstone,
Stands the Sculptor's marble dream:
From its face its soul is lifted,
And its wings soul-lifted seem.

On the tombstone stands the Angel,
And its left hand points below;
To its lips is press'd a finger:
'T is the Angel Death, I know.

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THE BURIED RING.

Across the door-step, worn and old,
The new bride, joyous, pass'd to-day;
The gray rooms show'd an artful gold,
All words were light, all faces gay.

Ah, many years have lived and died
Since she, the other vanish'd one,
Into that door, a timid bride,
Bore from the outer world the sun.

O lily, with the rose's glow!
O rose, the lily's garment clad!—
The rooms were golden long ago,
All words were blithe, all faces glad.

She wore upon her hand the ring,
Whose frail and human bond is gone—
A coffin keeps the jealous thing
Radiant in shut oblivion:

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For she, (beloved, who loved so well,)
In the last tremors of her breath,
Whisper'd of bands impossible—
"She would not give her ring to Death."

But he, who holds a newer face
Close to his breast with eager glow,
Has he forgotton her embrace,
The first shy maiden's, long ago?

Lo, in a ghostly dream of night,
A vision, over him she stands,
Her mortal face in heavenlier light,
With speechless blame but blessing hands!

And, smiling mortal sorrow's pain
Into immortal peace more deep,
She gives him back her ring again—
The new bride kisses him from sleep!

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AT CHRISTMAS EVE.

I saw the tide of Christmas
Within the darkness rise:
It flow'd in the hearts of the children,
And leap'd in their loving eyes.

The windows breathed the splendor
Of the joyous day at hand;
In the rainy streets of the city
Shone visions of Fairy-Land.

There were ships and cars and houses,
Built marvelously well;
Fruits from the Tropics of Fancy,
And flowers of Miracle!

There were picture-books of enchantment
Gems from the wonder-mines;
The ark with the world's old family,
And myriad new designs.

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There were birds and beasts unnumber'd,
Unnamed by me, I am sure;
And, wearing many costumes,
The world in miniature.

"Many a Tree of Christmas
Is loaded with joy to-night;
Many a bough shall blossom,
Enchanted, at morning light!"

I said, and thought of the children,
In many a dancing home,
For the Angel of Christmas waiting
And longing for him to come.

"They press their joyous faces
Against the darken'd pane,
And the lighted world behind them
They see without in the rain!"

I said, and thought of the children,
Abroad in the street at night,
Who know no Angel of Christmas
By gifts at morning light:

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"They press their saddened faces
Against the lighted pane
And the darken'd world behind them
They feel, without in the rain!"

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SUNDOWN.

While stealthy breezes kiss to frosty gold
The swells of foliage down the vale serene,
And all the sunset fills
The dreamland of the hills,
Now all the enchantment of October old
Feels a cold veil fall o'er its passing scene.

Low sounds of Autumn creep along the plains,
Through the wide stillness of the woodlands brown,
Where the still waters glean
The melancholy scene;
The cattle, lingering slow through river lanes,
Brush yellowing vines that swing through elm-trees down.

The forests, climbing up the northern air,
Wear far an azure slumber through the light,
Showing, in pictures strange,
The stealthy wand of change;
The corn shows languid breezes, here and there—
Faint-heard o'er all the bottoms wide and bright.

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On many a silent circle slowly blown,
The hawk, in sun-flush'd calm suspended high,
With careless trust of might
Slides wing-wide through the light—
Now golden through the restless dazzle shown,
Now drooping down, now swinging up the sky.

Wind-worn along their sunburnt gables old,
The barns are full of all the Indian sun,
In golden quiet wrought
Like webs of dreamy thought,
And in their Winter clasp serenely fold
The green year's earnest promise harvest-won.

With evening bells that gather, low or loud,
A village, through the distance, poplar-bound,
O'er meadows silent grown,
And lanes with crisp leaves strown,
Lifts up one spire, aflame, against a cloud
That slumbers eastward, slow and silver-crowned.

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WHITE FROST.

THE ghostly Frost is come;
I feel him in the night;
The breathless Leaves are numb,
Motionless with affright:
The moon, arisen late and still,
Sees all their faces beaded chill.

The ghostly Frost is here,
I see him in the night;
Through all the meadows near
Waver his garments white:
Ha! at our window looking through?
Ah, Frost, this Fire would conquer you!

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PASSENGERS.

NIGHT held aloft the gentle star,
  Her earliest watchfire in the dark,
And by the window of the car
  Flutter'd and flew the hurrying spark.

Its pathway finding through the snows,
  The train rush'd on with tremulous roar—
Like one whose purpose burns and glows,
  A torch to lead his life, before.

The darkness grew around the face
  Of every traveler for the night:
A sudden vision fill'd the place
  And touch'd the gloom with tender light.

Not from the holy world unknown:
  A gentle mission of the air
From happy hearth and threshold flown,
  Familiar angels, gather'd there.

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O prayers that breathe from faces bright,
  O thoughts of love that will not sleep,
O dreams that give the soul by night
  Its wings the body may not keep!

Not unattended, far away,
  The wanderer moves with throngs unknown;
Ye meet or follow, night or day—
  I saw your heavenly shapes alone!

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FORESIGHT OF FATE.

Mother and Child walk in a path of flowers,
Through a bright garden tended by the Hours.

From gentle blossoms, fragrant-hearted there,
Birds, singing, lift the child's heart into air.

Some dreadful House before them grows, unknown:
A ghost of grated casements stares from stone!

Whence came the phantom?—what enchantment wild?
The Mother sees it not nor can the child.

Lo, some lost face, haunting with dreamy glare
The darkness, looking through the darkness there!

How strange if he, lost to himself within,
Were that same child pure as a rose from sin;

And if that face, through those fierce bars aglare,
Saw that same Child cling to that Mother's care!

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TO ONE IN A DARKENED HOUSE.

O FRIEND, whose loss is mine in part,
  Your grief is mine in part, although
I can not measure in my heart
  The immeasurable woe.

As from a shining window cast
  The fireside's gleam abroad is known,
I knew the brightness that is pass'd—
  Its inner warmth your own.

O vanish'd firelight!—dark, without,
  The late illumined sphere of space;
The warmth within has died about
  Your darken'd heart and face.

If I could hide your gloom with light,
  Or breathe you back the warmth of old—
O vain! I stand in outer night
  And feel your inner cold!

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THE BIRTHDAYS.

O MORNING, sweet and bright and clear!
  Anew the earth seems blossoming:
In Summer's swarthy heart I hear
  The fountain-heads of Spring.

It is your birthday, dearest one—
  Far-off from you this summer day,
I think of many another sun
  That August took from May:

When—for your honor—sweet and bright,
  The month of dust and dead perfume
Remember'd May's delicious light,
  Her gentle breath and bloom.

I dream of many a birthday blithe,
  Baptizing earth with loving dew,
When Time the reaper hid his scythe
  And gather'd flowers for you.

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Lo, first I see the morning, love,
That on your mother's tender breast,
A wingless bird from Heaven above,
You found your earthly nest.

Your childhood's birthdays come and go,
Stealing from shining day to day
A lovely child with whom, I know,
The fairies loved to play.

Your grand old kinsman, Boone, I guess—
Ulysses of the Indian wild—
Enjoy'd no dearer loneliness
Than you a wandering child.

Shy as the butterfly you went
On visits to your baby flowers,
Among the lonely birds content
To pass unlonely hours.

Nature, I deem, those birthdays caught
You to her breast in solitude:
Her loveliest picture-books she brought
And read you in the wood.

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All lovely things she gave your love:
The humble flowers, the stars on high,
The lightning's awful wing above,
The tremulous butterfly.

My fancy, love-created, goes
Lightly from passing year to year:
My little fairy maiden grows
To tender girlhood dear.

A dreaming girl, as shy as dew
In dells of Fairyland apart,
Within your soul a lily grew—
A rose within your heart.

I follow on your changeful way,
Lift all the burdens from your hours,
Make you my constant queen of May
And wreathe your birthday flowers.

My fancy follows: ah, perchance,
I, Fairy Prince of fable true,
Found you asleep in fated trance
And kiss'd you ere you knew!

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They come, they vanish—swift or slow—
  Oh, long unmask'd, those maskéd years:
At last the birthdays that I know
  I see, with smiles and tears.

Your birthdays which are mine draw nigh:
  Lo, yours and mine are join'd in one!—
Mine with the blue-bird's prophecy,
  Yours with the August sun!

And, look, another joins the two:
  The First of March, the August day
Mingle their tender light and dew
  With Marian's in May!

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TO GRACE AT CHRISTMAS.

WITH AN EASTERN FAIRY-BOOK.

Sweet Fairyland! at Christmas, lo!
  Thy sunken splendors shine
To those who, Westward, farther go
  Out of the East divine—
Dear wonder-world by childhood won,
Lost Miracle of the Morning sun!

A blind man prison'd in the light,
  Still, as a blinded man, I look
At the old shapes of vanish'd sight
  In Memory's Marvel-Book.
I turn the pages, leaf by leaf,
And Fancy makes-believe belief!

But now at charmed words, alas!
  The treasure-doors have Treasury locks;
Aladdin's lamp (or gold or brass?)
  I rub: the Genius knocks!—
This coal-oil lamp was just in place:
"Come in"—a Genius? No, a Grace!

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TO GRACE AT CHRISTMAS.

Sweet little maiden, to your sight
  Fairies and Fairy-worlds may rise;
The East to you shows joyous light
  Where in his cradle lies
God's Gentle Child—this lovely morn
I saw him dead and crown'd with thorn!

A dreamer's fancy—never mind;
  You'd have a Fairy-Book, you said:
A gift of sunshine gives the blind
  When the sweet dreams are dead,
I pray that from your eyes and heart
Faith, the True Fairy, 'll ne'er depart!

DECEMBER 25, 1862.

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THE LAST FIRE.

THE First Fire, one remember'd night
Of chilly fall, we kindled: bright
And beautiful were its gleams!
Warming the new world all our own
And welcoming radiant futures, shone
That prophecy of our dreams!

Our window burn'd against the cold,
And faces from the dark, behold!
In transient haloes came;
The household troubadour of mirth,
The cricket, took with song our hearth
And bless'd the blessing flame.

O flushing firelight, rosy-warm!
O walls with many a floating form
Of dreamy shade a-bloom!
Fancy, by Love transfigured, wrought
All miracles of tender thought,
Transfiguring the room!

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Beloved and bless'd and beautified,
God-given, Angel by my side!
The winter came and went,
And never, since the world began,
Grew sweeter happiness to man,
Or tenderer content.

At dawn we leave the place, so warm
And bright with you December's storm
Nor cold nor shadow brought:
The Last Fire warms our walls to-night;
The window breathes its wonted light,
But sadness haunts our thought.

By tenderest tides of feeling stirr'd
Your heart brings tears for every word:
I hear you murmur low,
"Here blossom'd Home for you and me—
Love walk'd without his glamoury
And stood diviner so.

"Dear echoes, answering day by day—
We cannot take the past away!
The threshold and the floor,
Where Love's familiar steps have been
Repeated evermore within,
Are dear forever more!"

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Yes, but the place beloved shall be
Bequeath'd to loving Memory:
The spirits of the place,
The Larés of the household air,
Born of the heart, the heart must bear—
They know no stranger's face.

The atmosphere we fill is ours:
It moves with us its sun and showers;
It is our world alone,
Vivid with all our souls create,
The plastic dream, the stone of Fate—
We take and keep our own.

So let the Last Fire flame and fall,
The ghostly ember-shadows crawl,
The ashes fill the hearth:
The cricket travels where we go,
And Home is but the Heaven below
Transfiguring the Earth!

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TO MY BROTHER GUY,

AFTER BUTTERFLIES.

I HAVE watch'd you, little Guy,
Chasing many a butterfly;
I have seen you, boy, by stealth
Strive to pluck the flying wealth
From the blossoms where it grew,
Miracle of a moment new;
I have seen your redden'd face,
Radiant from the bootless chase,
Happy-eyed, with gladness sweet
Laugh away each late defeat;
I have heard your panting heart,
Eager for another start,
Taking newer chances fair
For the elusive flower of air.
I'll not check your joyous chase,
Calling it a useless race;
I will not discourage you
With experience seeming-true,

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Showing you with cynic art
Chrysales within my heart;
I 'll not whisper, prophesying,
That the wings are golden, flying—
Dropping all their pretty dust
At the touch of the sweet trust:
Words of warm simplicity,
Fusing cold philosophy,
These would light your lips and brow—
You would chase them anyhow!
Chase them, fleet-foot champion,
Lithe knight-errant of the sun!
Chase the sultry butterflies,
Tropic summers in disguise!
Chase them, while your buoyant feet
Take the heart's ecstatic beat,
While your playmate is the breeze,
While the flowers will hide the bees,
While the birds come singing to you,
While the sunshine gladdens through you!
Butterflies, if caught or not,
Thorough many a gentle spot
They will lead—though vain the chase
It must be in the heaven's face:

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For they fly among the flowers,
In bright air, through sunny hours.
Chase them—nothing's dead nor dying:
Look, your butterflies are flying!

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RESURRECTION.

No season, O friend, may seem
Dearer than that through which I seem'd to go
When the blind Fever, piloting my dream,
Drifted me to and fro.

I thought that you were lost:
That Light in the dark, or Shadow in the sun,
Had taken you; and helpless I was toss'd—
Comfortless and undone!

Through all familiar air
That you had breathed I wander'd, but I found
Only your absence in my own despair—
O never-healing wound!

I could not find you, and
I knew I could not; in a grave you lay
Which I had seen not—over dust and sand
Blown in a wind's lost way!

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At last you came: behold,
I saw you—from among the dead, I deem'd:
Not free from Death, but bearing as of old
Your living child, you seem'd.

White with the following light
Of some new world, whose darkness we but know
Who blindly look, you claim'd your dearest right,
The mother's place, below.

A mother's tender heart,
That would not rest, had brought you to your own.
They told me soon again you must depart
And leave your world alone.

But still you stay'd and still
You would not go, and Life again at last
Renew'd the warm persuasion of its will,
Breathing, and held you fast.

And so my dream was gone.
Lo, I had wander'd almost to that brink
Where the great Darkness standing in the Dawn
Makes the night-traveler shrink.

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'T was I had pass'd away,
And my return that brought you back to me;
I, blind in the mist—you, vanish'd in the day,
Return'd when I could see.

And, still unwearying, lo!
Though worn and weary, you had trembled near,
O tender watcher, fearing I should go,
And hoping out your fear!

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MOONRISE.

'Tis midnight and the city lies
With dreaming heart and closéd eyes:
The giant's folded hands at rest,
Like Prayer asleep, are on his breast.

From windows hush'd, I see alone
The tide-worn streets so silent grown:
The dusty footprints of the day
Are bless'd with dew and steal away.

Oh, scarce a pulse of sound! Afar,
Flashes upon a spire a star—
Lo, in the East a dusky light:
Ghost-like the moon moves through the night.

Unveiling slow, a face of blood
She lifts into the solitude!
The city sleeps; above, behold
The moonrise kiss a cross of gold!

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Golden in air that cross: at rest
Below the city's sleeping breast;
And on the cross, moon-brighten'd, see!
Christ, dying, smiles down lovingly!

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TO A CHILD.

Oh, while from me, this tender morn, depart
  Dreams vague and vain and wild,
Sing, happy child, and dance into my heart,
  Where I was once a child!

Your eyes they send the butterflies before,
  Your lips they kiss the rose;
O gentle child, Joy opes your morning door—
  Joy kisses your repose!

The fairy Echo-children love you, try
  To steal your loving voice;
Flying you laugh—they, laughing while you fly,
  Gay with your glee rejoice.

Oh, while from me, this tender morn, depart
  Dreams vague and vain and wild,
Play, happy child—sing, dance within my heart,
  Where I will be a child!

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THE BLUE-BIRD'S BURIAL.

I.

After long rains November, in a brief dream of Spring,
Had the tearful eyes of April; some trees were blossoming.

But, long before, October dear April's bloom had bless'd—
Her goldenest hope lay ripen'd upon his swarthy breast.

Hush'd were the noons and leafless the boughs of the cherry tree,
Where the blue-bird sang as prophet, and as preacher humm'd the bee.

Deep in her palace of honey the queen-bee dream'd of Spring,
And moved in winter slumber while the trees were blossoming.

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And the blue-bird dropp'd—remember, we buried him, darling, found
With the dead leaves, nameless, homeless, and coffinless, on the ground.

We found him and bless'd and buried the prophet of blossom and bee,
With painted leaves for his cover, under his laurel tree:

Saying, "Dear poet and prophet, you bless'd the world, we know;
We give you the poet's guerdon—a grave in Winter snow.

"But blesséd and blessing forever shall be the life you led;
Your breath was a breath of heaven—sleep warm in the Earth's cold bed.

"Forgotten and unremember'd?—remember'd and unforgot!
Your soul shall rise and flutter from many a poet's thought;

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"And all the haunted silence deep in the poet's
breast,
Of Spring and Love and Longing, shall rise with
wings, express'd.

"Sleep, therefore, April's darling, twin of the violet
dead,
With the ghost of song in your bosom, the star-
flower at your head."

II.

You found the star-flower, dearest. O never—though
all the years
Go out with dirges and darkness and comfortless
Rachel's tears—

Shall flush the world with fragrance a Spring so lovely
here
As the dream of Spring, in Autumn, to me you made
so dear;

When, wandering in the woodland, that gentle day,
we found
The blue-bird, nameless, homeless, and coffinless, on
the ground;

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When, child at heart forever, but woman sweet and
brave,
With world-old, tender fancies, you kiss'd the blue-
bird's grave.

That night the late, hush'd moonrise came, dusky,
large and red:
Jewel'd with frosty jewels it saw November dead.

Within, our fire kept dancing to all sweet dreams and
bright:
You said, "I hear the blue-bird sing in my heart
to-night."

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SLEEP.

The Mist crawls over the River,
  Hiding the shore on either side,
And, under the veiling Mist forever,
  Neither hear we nor feel we the tide.

But our skiff has the will of the River,
  Though nothing is seen to be pass'd;
Though the Mist may hide it forever, forever
  The current is drawing as fast.

The matins sweet from the far-off town
  Fill the air with their beautiful dream;
The vespers were hushing the twilight down
  When we lost our oars on the stream.

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FROST ON THE PANES.

Before my window standing
I see the dream-like glow
Of Frost against the dawning:
Old fancies come and go.

A little child is gazing,
With wonder-lighted eyes,
Before the white enchantment
That veils the morning skies.

His mother steals beside him:
The marvellous picture gleams—
The Fairy, Frost, has painted
His Fairy world of dreams!

Weird woodlands shine enchanted
With crystal boughs so bright,
Where ghouls alone have wander'd;
Strange castles haunt the hight.

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Lo, while the child is gazing,
The white enchantment 's fled,
And I, alone, awaken,
And Fairyland is dead !

I look out through the window :
The market roars and beats,
With myriad wheels and footsteps
The crowded morning streets.

Tears stand upon the window,
For the frost-work's fragile gleam,
And on my cheek are tear-drops,
Old relics of my dream.

Tears shine upon the window,
Where the frost-work flash'd before :
Ah, in Time's Eastern windows
Are frosted panes no more !

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TO THE LARES.

Dear Household Deities, worshipp'd best, we deem,
With gentle sacrifice of Love alone!
Guardians of Home, who make the hearthstone seem
Altar and shrine, O make our hearth your own:
Whether the North-wind walls the world away
With snowy bastions from his frozen lands,
Or Zephyr through our window, day by day,
Climbs like a child with roses in his hands.

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Benjamin M. Piatt.

Ob. April 20, 1863—Æt. 84.

Near his loved home, among familiar flowers,
(Whose memories mingle fragrant breath with ours,)
Sleeps a gray father of the mighty West.
His hands had Nature's plea for folded rest:
For, through long years and manhood's noble strife,
Whiten'd his head above his golden life.
He pass'd as one who from his harvest goes,
Attended by the sun, to his repose—
Gracious and good. Behold his simple fame:
He lies asleep beneath his honor'd name.

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FOR A GRAVESTONE.

THE marble has no speech but that we give,
And we are dumb, and, speechless, pass away;
The silence in which our affections live
Holds all we need to speak and can not say.

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THE SIGHT OF ANGELS.

THE angels come, the angels go,
Through open doors of purer air;
Their moving presence oftentimes we know,
It thrills us every-where.

Sometimes we see them: lo, at night,
Our eyes were shut but open'd seem:
The darkness breathes a breath of wondrous light,
And then it was a dream!

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SONNETS.

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MY SHADOW'S STATURE.

WHENE'ER, in morning airs, I walk abroad,
Breasting upon the hills the buoyant wind,
Up from the vale my shadow climbs behind,
An earth-born giant climbing toward his god;
Against the sun, on heights before untrod,
I stand: faint glorified, but undefined,
Far down the slope in misty meadows blind,
I see my ghostly follower slowly plod.
"O stature of my shade," I muse and sigh,
"How great art thou, how small am I the while!"
Then the vague giant blandly answers, "True,
But though thou art small thy head is in the sky,
Crown'd with the sun and all the Heaven's smile—
My head is in the shade and valley too."

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MY NIGHTMARE.

All day my nightmare in my thought I keep:
  Spell-bound, it seem'd, by some magician's charm,
  A giant slumber'd on my slothful arm—
His great, slow breathings jarr'd the land of sleep,
(Like far-off thunder, rumbling low and deep,)
  Lifting his brawny bosom bronzed and warm—
  When lo! a voice shook me with stern alarm:
"Who art thou here that dost not sow nor reap?
  Behold the Sleeping Servant of thy Day—
Arouse him to thy deed: if thou but break
  His slumberous spell, awake he will obey."
I lifted up my voice and cried "Awake!"
And I awoke!—my arm, unnerved, lay dead,
A useless thing beneath my sleeping head!

My Birthday, 1863.

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TO A POET: ON HIS MARRIAGE.

"The Artist with his Art alone should wed,"
They say, the worldly wise, "who runs may read;"
And I would grant it holy truth indeed,
Did Art want men in whom the man was dead—
Pale priesthood. But with fullest life, instead,
She ordains her truer worshippers: her need
Is men who live as well as dream their deed;
She loves to see her lovers sweat for bread.
My friend, I know you not as one who bear,
Dream-like, upon your soul the ideal sphere
And kick the real world beneath your feet:
I see you, brave young Atlas, lift in air
The loving load of manhood, without fear.
Both worlds be one to you, a world complete!

II.

If you should ask me what your life should seem,
Built by the great, slow mason, Time, for you,
(My wishes being master-builders, too,)
I'd say a grand cathedral, with the stream

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Of wondrous light through windows all a-gleam
  With heavenliest shapes and sacred histories true
  Of truest lives that e'er immortal grew
From low mortality's divinest dream.
Above, uplifted on some chaunt divine,
  An angel choir should cluster, dumb in stone;
Below, and rapt in the religious air,
Most saintly brows should with a halo shine:
  And, amid marble multitudes alone,
Lo! one sweet woman's face the holiest there!

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THE BOOK OF GOLD.

I.

If I could write a Book made sweet with thee,
And therefore sweet with all that may be sweet,
With lingering music never more complete
Should turn its golden pages: each should be
Like whispering voices, beckoning hands, and he
Who read should follow, while his heart would beat
For some new miracle, with most eager feet
Through loving labyrinths of mystery.
Temple and lighted home of Love should seem
The Book wherein my love remember'd thine:
There holiest visions evermore should gleam,
Vanishing wings, with wandering souls of sound
And breaths of incense from an inmost shrine
Sought nearer evermore and never found.

II.

Vague wishes, in my bosom, never cold
Brought these vague words to me one Summer night,
Longing to prison in crystal the sweet light

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My soul had breathed and write a Book of Gold
To keep my love within the radiant fold
Of Love's true heraldry in histories bright;
And Love, the only poet, whisper'd "Write,"
When I began with impulse overbold
Which had dumb lips—then, turning, spake to Love:
"Sweet Master, how shall I, unskilful, know
To speak of thee and thine, all things above?"
"I still shall hold thy hand and guide thy heart;
Let what is mine be thine," he answer'd low,
"And what is artful Love's thy loving Art."

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TRAVELERS.

We may not stand content: it is our part
To drag slow footsteps after the far sight,
The long endeavor following up the bright
Quick aspiration; there is ceaseless smart
Feeling but cold-hand surety for warm heart
Of all desire; no man may say at night
His goal is reach'd; the hunger for the light
Moves with the star; our thirst will not depart,
Howe'er we drink. 'T is what before us goes
Keeps us aweary, will not let us lay
Our heads in dreamland, though the enchanted palm
Rise from our desert, though the fountain grows
Up in our path, with slumber's flowering balm:
The soul is o'er the horizon far away.

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ANNIVERSARY.

A MOTHER and a Child, most blesséd sight,
My spirit saw—a pure and holy pair:
The infant open-eyed to morning air
Of its new world, baptized in earthly light;
The Mother with the ecstatic knowledge bright
Of her first motherhood, how gently fair!
Breathing her blissful breath to heaven in prayer,
Keeping her heart so near her new delight!
"Who are you, gentle visions?" then I said—
But these were gone. An Angel came and spoke:
"I am that mother; see my darling's head
I lay upon your bosom." I awoke,
Warm with great tender gratitude, and wept;
Your head was on my bosom while I slept.

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TWOFOLD.

If you should vanish, in some lonely place,
And never, never more appear again,
(Though your lost face should float about my brain,
The elusive phantom of a lost embrace,
Out of the mystery of a starless space,)
And I should strive, with long conceptive pain,
Your form so dear from marble to regain,
Or paint the flying memory of your face:
I have not seen you, love, as others deem—
Though stone or color might their semblance give,
I'd watch a child steal shyly from your heart,
To comfort little birds that orphans seem,
Or flowers that need a drop of dew to live,
And this, I think, would baffle subtle art.

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A BUST IN CLAY.*

S. P. C.

A NOBLE soul is breathing from the clay,
Created, Sculptor, with a soul by thee;
A noble soul a noble man's must be:
One of a few, he knelt not to the Day
Nor petty stampings of the applausive Hour,
But, in the dark of her uprising light,
Upheld in word and served in deed the Right,
Nor sued the million-headed mob for power.
O beautiful! on the calm lips, content,
Breathes the high presence of a life well spent;
Such brows the centuries love! No marble needs
His soul that carves itself in marble deeds:
Oh, be it long—Ohio's prayer my own—
Ere clay or marble keeps that soul, alone!

January, 1859.

* By T. D. JONES, Sculptor, Cincinnati, Ohio.

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MIRAGE.

I KNOW the Mirage—the vague, wandering ghost
That haunts the desert's still and barren sand
With the close vision of a lovelier land,
Once blossoming but now forever lost:
It rises to the eyes of men who bear
Hunger of heart and thirst of lip in vain—
Mocking their souls with rest. Behold, how plain!
Taking the breathless sand and boundless air,
It comes up from the horizon, far away:
Lost fountains flutter under beckoning palm,
(Singing, all birds of longing thither start,)
Dear voices rise from homes where children play,
The footsteps lighten, the blest air blows balm.
Then all is sand—within a dreamer's heart!

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SEPTEMBER.

ALL things are full of life this autumn morn;
The hills seem growing under silver cloud;
A fresher spirit in Nature's breast is born;
The woodlands are blowing lustily and loud;
The crows fly, cawing, among the flying leaves;
On sunward-lifted branches struts the jay;
The fluttering brooklet, quick and bright, receives
Bright frosty silverings slow from ledges gray
Of rock in buoyant sunshine glittering out;
Cold apples drop through orchards mellowing;
'Neath forest-eaves quick squirrels laugh and shout;
Farms answer farms as through bright morns of Spring,
And joy, with dancing pulses full and strong,
Joy, every-where, goes Maying with a song!

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THE WEEK.

SWEET Days, God's daughters, shining o'er the world!
Bright are your feet on the far morning shore,
And, going back to heaven for evermore
Through twilight's dreamy golden gates unfurl'd,
Your footsteps in the dews of evening shine.
A radiant garland round the burning throne,
Guarded with angel wings—a heavenly zone—
Fair are ye all, dear Rays of Light Divine!
Yet fairest is she, the youngest of your name,
In her pure garment of translucent white,
And wearing on her head the halo-light
Brightening till all things near her wear the same:
For—though God loves ye all—when ye are bless'd
His Hand lies on her brow, dear Day of Rest!

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THE WHITE LILY.

I DREAM'D and saw a lily in my dream
Of fever'd wakefulness at twilight hour:
Issuing from moonlight grew that blessèd flower
Over my pillow, and the tender gleam
Of its white gentleness, like a soothing stream,
Alighted on me, and I ask'd: "What dower
Of purity is thine, that 'gainst the power
Of all impurity a charm doth seem?"
Transfigured dreadlessly the lily grew
An angel's stature, passing so away.
Then I awoke from fever which had been,
But in that dewy presence could not stay,
And over me you lean'd with holier dew.
Out of your heart had grown the flower within.

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AWAKE IN DARKNESS.

MOTHER, if I could cry from out the night
And you could come (Oh, tearful memory!)
How softly close! to soothe and comfort me,
As when a child awaken'd with affright,
My lips again, as weak and helpless quite,
Would call you, call you, sharp and plaintively—
O vain, vain, vain! Your face I could not see;
Your voice no more would bring my darkness light.
To this shut room, though I should wail and weep,
You would not come to speak one brooding word
And let its comfort warm me into sleep
And leave me dreaming of its comfort heard:
Though all the night to morn at last should creep,
My cry would fail, your answer be deferr'd.

NOVEMBER, 1865.

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THE CHILD IN THE STREET.

FOR A BOOK OF TWO.

EVEN as tender parents lovingly
  Send a dear child in some true servant's care
  Forth on the street, for larger light and air,
Feeling the sun her guardian will be,
And dreaming with a blushful pride that she
  Will earn sweet smiles and glances every-where,
  From loving faces, and that passers fair
Will bend, and bless, and kiss her, when they see,
And ask her name, and if her home is near,
  And think, "O gentle child, how bless'd are they
  Whose twofold love bears up a single flower!"
And so with softer musing move away:
  We send thee forth, O Book, thy little hour—
The world may pardon us to hold thee dear.

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FIVE YEARS.

15

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THE BRONZE STATUE—APRIL, 1861.

Uplifted when the April sun was down,
Gold-lighted by the tremulous, fluttering beam,
Touching his glimmering steed with spurs in gleam,
The Great Virginia Colonel into town
Rode, with the scabbard, emptied, on his thigh,
The Leader's hat upon his head, and lo!
The old still manhood in his face aglow,
And the old generalship up in his eye!
"O father!" said I, speaking in my heart,
"Though but thy bronzéd form is ours alone,
And marble lips here in thy chosen place,
Rides not thy spirit in to keep thine own,
Or weeps thy Land, an orphan in the mart?"
The twilight dying lit the deathless face.

Washington, D. C.

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HONORS OF WAR.

WAILS of slow music move along the street,
Before the slow march of a myriad feet
Whose mournful echoes come;
Banners are muffled, hiding all their sight
Of sacred stars—the century's dearest light—
And, muffled, throbs the drum.

Proud is the hearse our Mother gives her son,
On the red altar laid her earliest one!
Wrapp'd in her holiest pall
He goes: her household guardians follow him,
Eyes with their new heroic tears are dim;
The stern to-morrows call!

Well might the youth who saw his coffin'd face,
Lying in state within the proudest place,
Long for a lot so high:
He was the first to leap the treacherous wall;
First in the arms of Death and Fame to fall—
To live because to die!

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Pass on, with wails of music, moving slow,
Thy dark dead-march, O Mother dress'd in woe!
Lo, many another way
Shall blacken after, many a sacred head
Brightly thy stars shall fold, alive though dead,
From many a funeral day!

Weep, but grow stronger in thy suffering:
From their dead brothers' graves thy sons shall bring
New life of love for thee:
The long death-marches herald, slow or fast,
The resurrection-hour of men at last
New-born in Liberty!

WASHINGTON, May, 1861.

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A SABBATH IN JULY.

A YEAR ago to-day, the Sabbath hours
  Were sweet to us, wandering together, here
  In these green woods. The skies were soft and clear,
And the sun wrought his miracles in flowers.
Sweet was the Sabbath stillness of these bowers;
  The birds sang in the tender atmosphere,
  And God's own voice seem'd whispering low and near
To His hush'd children in those hearts of ours.
Lo! scarcely mingling with the real day,
  Far thunders beat in the heart of solitude,
Echoes of Hell to Heaven's divine repose:
  For, while we breathed the breathless Sabbath wood,
The cannon's awful monotone arose
  Where the dread Sabbath-breaking Preacher stood!

July 21, 1862.

Digitized by Google

THE NESTS AT WASHINGTON.

Before the White House portals,
The careless eyes behold
Three iron bombs uplifted,
Adusk in summer gold.

In dreamy mood I wander'd
At Sabbath sunset there,
While the wide city's murmur
Hummed vaguely everywhere:

"Black seeds of desolation,"
I said, "by War's red hand
Sown in the fierce sirocco
Over the wasted Land!

"Unholy with the holy,
What do ye here to-day,
Symbols of awful battle,
In Sabbath's peaceful ray?"

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Angel of Dust and Darkness!
I heard thy woeful breath,
With noise of all earth's battles,
Answer: "Let there be Death!"

I thought of many a midnight,
Where sprang terrific light
Over wide woods and marshes;
Fierce fire-flies lit the night.

I saw beleaguer'd bastions
Leap up in red dismay,
Wide rivers all transfigured
Awake in dreadful day.

Asleep in peaceful sunshine
Glimmer'd the warlike things:
Into their hollow horror
Flew tenderest summer wings!

Deep in the awful chambers
Of the gigantic Death,
The wrens their nests had builded
And dwelt with loving breath.

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Angel of Resurrection!
Over all buried strife
I heard thy bird-song whisper,
Sweetly, "Let there be Life!"

WASHINGTON, D. C., June, 1862.

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SONNET—IN 1862.

Stern be the Pilot in the dreadful hour
  When a great nation, like a ship at sea
  With the wroth breakers whitening at her lee,
Feels her last shudder if her Helmsman cower;
A godlike manhood be his mighty dower!
  Such and so gifted, Lincoln, may'st thou be
  With thy high wisdom's low simplicity
And awful tenderness of voted power:
From our hot records then thy name shall stand
  On Time's calm ledger out of passionate days—
With the pure debt of gratitude begun
  And only paid in never-ending praise—
One of the many of a mighty Land
Made by God's providence the Anointed One.

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THE BALLAD OF A ROSE.

My folded flower last Summer grew
  Sweetly in a glad Southern place;
Its heart was filled with peaceful dew,
  The peaceful sunshine kiss'd its face.

Beside the threshold of a cot
  It knew familiar household ties,
The May's beloved forget-me-not
  To maiden's lips and children's eyes.

Bees climb'd about it; birds above
  Sang in the flush'd year of the rose:
"Our new millennium of Love
  Begins with every May it blows."

Warm cottage-windows murmur'd near
  All music making home so sweet—
The mother's voice divinely dear,
  The lisping tongues, the pattering feet.

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Ah, little rose, another tale
  On your dumb lips has waited long
(Since then your tender lips grew pale)—
  Speak, darling; make your speech my song!

Another tale than cottage peace,
  Than balmy quiet, hovering wings
Of humming-birds and honey-bees,
  And Summer's breath of shining things.

Ah, little rose, your lips are mute:
  Could Fancy give them words to-day,
Such histories would but sadly suit
  Those lips that knew but Love and May!

You woke, one Sabbath, warm and sweet:
  The fields were bright with dewy glow;
The sun smiled o'er the springing wheat,
  And spake, "Let all things lovelier grow!"

What answer rock'd the awaken'd earth,
  Strange echo to that voice divine!
Before the battle's awful birth
  The earth and heaven gave no sign.

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The cannon thunder'd every-where;
  The bomb sprang howling from afar,
A coming earthquake born in air,
  A wingéd hell, a bursting star!

And lo! about the sacred spot
  Where late the doves of home would 'light.
Men red with battle falter'd not
  Though others lay with faces white.

The lowly roof of Love, behold!
  Is rent by shell and cannon-ball;
The rifles flame from casements old;
  By bullets torn the roses fall!

Under the rose-tree where you grew,
  A soldier, dying, look'd and saw
Your face, that only Sabbath knew,
  With Nature's love and Heaven's law.

He heard with ebbing blood and breath,
  At your sweet charm, the thunder cease,
And in that earthquake-hour of Death
  The cannon jarr'd the bells of Peace.

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For while he saw you, tender flower!
So peaceful in that troubled place,
A tenderer vision touch'd the hour
And left its halo on his face.

A captain pluck'd you, in the roar
Of battle, o'er his comrade slain,
And through the fight your beauty bore
Bloodless upon the bloody plain.

Dear rose, within your folded leaves
I know what other memory lies;
I hear (or else my ear deceives)
Your wail of homesick longing rise

"O happy Summer, lost to me!
O threshold, mine to guard no more!"
You yearn for visits of the bee
To rose's heart and cottage-door.

Rest in my book, O precious flower!
And seem—a whitening face above—
The witness in the battle hour
Of Peace and Home, of God and Love!

1862.

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THE OPEN SLAVE-PEN.

We start from sleep in morning's buoyant dawn,
And find the horror which our sleep oppress'd
A vanish'd darkness, in the daylight gone—
The nightmare's burthen leaves the stifled breast.

Yet still a presence moves about the brain,
Some frightful shadow lost in hazy light,
And in the noonday highway comes again.
The loathsome phantom of the breathless night.

So, while before these hateful doors I stand,
I feel the burdening darkness which is pass'd,
Or passing surely from the awaken'd land:
The nightmare clutches me and holds me fast.

Back from the years that seem so long ago
Return the dark processions which have been;
Lifting again lost manacles of woe
They enter here—they vanish, going in.

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Hark to the smother'd murmur of a race
  Within these walls—its helpless wail and moan—
Which, for the ancient shadow on its face,
  Call'd not the morning's new-born light its own!

Imprison'd here, what unforgotten cries
  Of hopeless torture and what sights of woe,
From cotton-field and rice-plantation rise!—
  These walls have heard, and seen, and witness show.

The human drove, the human driver, see!
  Hark, the dread bloodhound in the swamp at bay!
The whipping-post reëchoes agony;
  The slave-mart blackens all the shameful day.

The wife and husband, see, asunder thrust;
  The mother dragg'd from her far children's wail;
The maiden torn from love and given to lust—
  The Human Family in a bill of sale!

All sounds reëcho, all sights reäppear:
  (O blindness, deafness! that ye can not be!)
All sounds of woe, that have been heard, I hear;
  All sights of shame, that have been seen, I see!

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O sounds, be still! O visions, leave the day!—
What thunder trembled on the sultry air?
What lightnings went upon their breathless way?
Behold the stricken gates of old despair!

The writing on these barbarous walls was plain;
The curse has fallen none would understand:
God's deluge ere another happier rain;
His plow of fire before the reaper's land!

The awful nightmare slips into its night,
With cannon-flash and noise of hurrying shell:
O prisons, open for returning light,
The sun is in the world, and all is well!

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THE DEAR PRESIDENT.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN, the Dear President,
Lay in the Round Hall at the Capitol,
And there the people came to look their last.

There came the widow, weeded for her mate;
There came the mother, sorrowing for her son;
There came the orphan moaning for its sire.

There came the soldier, bearing home his wound;
There came the slave, who felt his broken chain;
There came the mourners of a blacken'd Land.

Through the dark April day, a ceaseless throng,
They pass'd the coffin, saw the sleeping face,
And, blessing it, in silence moved away.

And one, a poet, spake within his heart:
"It harm'd him not to praise him when alive;
And me it can not harm to praise him dead.

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"Too oft the muse has blush'd to speak of men—
No muse shall blush to speak her best of him,
And still to speak her best of him is dumb.

"O lofty wisdom's low simplicity!
O awful tenderness of voted power!—
No man e'er held so much of power so meek.

"He was the husband of the husbandless,
He was the father of the fatherless:
Within his heart he weigh'd the common woe.

"His call was like a father's to his sons:
As to a father's voice, they, hearing, came—
Eager to offer, strive, and bear, and die.

"The mild bond-breaker, servant of his Lord,
He took the sword, but in the name of Peace,
And touched the fetter, and the bound was free.

"Oh, place him not among the historic kings,
Strong, barbarous chiefs and bloody conquerors,
But with the great and pure Republicans:

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"Those who have been unselfish, wise, and good,
Bringers of Light and Pilots in the dark,
Bearers of Crosses, Servants of the World.

"And always, in his Land of birth and death,
Be his fond name—warm'd in the people's hearts—
Abraham Lincoln, the Dear President."

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TO R. C. S.

DEAR General, in the Age of Chivalry—
  That Golden Age of Manhood, whose lost seed
  Blossom'd in you—true men of loyal breed
Bow'd under kingly swords, on bended knee,
And rose with Knighthood holy, sworn to be
  Champions of Right and guardians at her need,
  Their life the errand of some noble deed
Halo'd by History, crown'd by Poesy.
But Nature, first Knight-maker then as now,
  (For Kings were but her servants and are still,)
Put her great seal of Knighthood on your brow,
  And we behold you sacred to her will,
Knowing why on your thigh the sword is seen
And on your hair the civic wreath is green.

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THE UNBENDED BOW.

In some old realm, we read, when war had come,
The bended bow, a warlike sign, was sent
Across the land—a summoner fierce but dumb;
When peace return'd the bow was pass'd unbent.

Oh, sacred Land! not many years ago
(The symbol breathes its meaning evermore),
Thy holy summons, came the bended bow—
Thy fiery bearers moved from door to door.

Then sprang thy brave from threshold and from hearth;
Their angry footsteps sounded, moving far,
As when an earthquake moves across the earth;
Shone on thy hills the flame-lit tents of war.

O tender wife, in all thy weakness stern
With the great purpose which thy husband drew;
O mother dreaming of thy son's return,
Strong with the arm whose strength thy country knew;

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O maiden, proud to hold a hero's name
  Close in thy prayerful silence, blameless: lo,
Transfigured in the light of love and fame,
  They come, the bearers of the unbended bow!

"The strife is hush'd, O Land!"—this voice is plain—
  "The bow of Peace is borne from door to door:
May thy dread power be never tried again;
  But let thine arrows shine for evermore."

1865.

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FOOTSTEPS RETURNING.

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RIDING THE HORSE TO MARKET.

Old miracles happen every day:
That nothing 's new in earth or air
It needs no Solomon to say.

Wonderful to the foaling mare,
Was dropp'd a colt of marvelous mettle.
'T was common stock, both dam and sire.
His mane was like a flying fire
When in the unbridled fields he flew,
And some believed him wingéd, too.
The use of such a skittish creature
The village folk could hardly settle;
No rider dared his dangerous back
Save one, a youth, whose mate he seem'd,
Who shunn'd like him the dusty track
With something of a kindred nature—
A boy who did not well but dream'd,
A vagabond with half-shut eyes
Who would not sow in Paradise:

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To this one as his rider bow'd
The flying-footed—humble, proud.

'T was plain he was not fit to plow;
For lead or wheel horse on the road
In vain were all attempts to break him—
(To lead right willing he, in truth,
Where none could follow him!) Forsooth,
He balk'd and scorn'd the curse or goad!
"He 's good to look at, that is clear,
But little profit anyhow"—
A wrinkle cross'd the farmer's brow—
"And so we 'll find him rather dear.
He eats enough—Lord knows—we know!
Here! mount your run-away and go—
To-morrow to the market take him!"

The saying, then the doing: rare
The splendors of the morning show'd,
When ready for the journey there
Stood horse and rider on the road.
"For how much shall I sell him?" said
The youth with pangs of dumb regret:
"As much," the old man hot and red,
"As he will bring and you will get!"

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With many a shying make-pretense,
As half in earnest, half in play,
At sliding nothings on the way,
With dainty prance and flame-like bound,
Aërial miles of flying fence,
The dust behind, the wind before,
Townward the horse his rider bore—
Within the air, upon the ground.
At length at day's most noisy heat
They enter'd in the market street;
Among the buyers soon they come,
When—strange that it should happen so,
But so it often happens—lo,
The crowd for praise or blame are dumb:
The merits of the matchless steed,
Unrecognized, have little heed.
At last one cried—"What have we here?
A beggar come to market, clear!"
"What sorry jade is that?" another.
And, strange!—how strange it seem'd, indeed!—
Behold, the wondrous-mettled steed
Has lost the spirit late so plain
In forehead, foot, and mien and mane;
His eyes are dull, his flank no more
Shines with the sunshine, as before;

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Their breath his nostrils lose or smother;
His ribs look out, his head is dropp'd,
And, standing lost in public gaze,
His heavenly pulses flutter, stopp'd.
"You want to sell?" a jockey says—
"I think, whatever be your price,
Your buyer makes the sacrifice."
"What are his good points?—let us know them."
"As for his oats—why, let him show them!"
"How many minutes make his mile?"
"I have a dray-horse just his mate!"
"Here, smith, is something for your doing:
What hoofs!—he needs a deal of shoeing!"
And one, a punner, passing late,
"This was the wingéd horse, I vow:
That he 's gone up—you see it now!"
Spoke with a self-perceiving smile.
"Speaking of wings," another cries,
"His can't be seen, you see: perhaps
His ears, which can be seen, he flaps
And thinks him flying—from the flies!"

The jockey's scorn, the jeerer's aim,
Meanwhile, the horse and rider both,
In mutual weakness, mutual shame,

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Hear—for they must, however loth.
Till—at the last, when, weary grown,
The crowd disperse and leave them there
Unbought within the mart alone—
Awaken'd into buoyant air
From something like a dream of fame,
A poet sees the sultry gleam
Of morning on the city flame,
Far-off, and that deliverance came
Thanks God: the Pegasus he strode
And to the dusty market rode
Was the vague Nothing of his dream!

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THE FIRST TRYST.

She pulls a rose from her rose-tree,
  Kissing its soul to him—
Far over years, far over dreams
  And tides of chances dim.

He plucks from his heart a poem;
  A flower-sweet messenger,
Far over years, far over dreams,
  Flutters its soul to her.

These are the world-old lovers,
  Clasped in one twilight's gleam:
Yet he is but a dream to her,
  And she a poet's dream.

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THE BURIED ORGAN.

Far in a valley green and lone,
  Lying within some legend old,
Sometimes is heard an Organ's tone,
  Trembling, into the silence roll'd:
In vanish'd years (the legend stands)
  To save it from the unhallowing prey
Of foeman's sacrilegious hands,
  The monks their Organ bore away.

None knows the spot wherein they laid
  That body of the heavenly soul
Of Music: deep in forest shade,
  Forgotten, lies the grave they stole;
But oftentimes, in Morning gold,
  Or through the Twilight's hushing air,
Within that valley, green and old,
  The Organ's soul arises there.

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Oh, low and sweet, and strange, and wild,
It whispers to the holier air,
Gentle as lispings of a child—
Mild as a mother's breathless prayer
While silence trembles, sweet and low:
Then rapture bursts into the skies,
And chanting angels, winging slow
On wings of music, seem to rise!

The herdsman sometimes, all alone,
Is lost within that haunted air:
He hears the buried Organ's tone—
His hands are cross'd, his breath is prayer!
And, while into his heart it steals,
With hushing footsteps, downcast eyes,
Some grand cathedral's awe he feels—
A church of air, and earth, and skies!

Often, when the sweet wand of Spring
Has fill'd the woods with flowers unsown,
Or Autumn's dreamy breeze's wing
Flutters through falling leaves, alone
I wander forth, and leave behind
The city's dust, the sultry glare:
A lonely dell, far-off, I find—
I know the Buried Organ there!

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Within the city's noisy air
  I leave the creeds their Sabbath bells;
I cross my hands, my breath is prayer,
  Hearing that Organ's mystic swells.
The sweet birds sing, the soft winds blow,
  The flowers have whispers low, apart:
All wake within me, loud or low,
  God's buried Organ—in my heart!

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TWO PATRONS.

"WHAT shall I sing," I sigh'd and said,
"That men shall know me when my name
Is lost with kindred lips and dead
Are laurels of familiar fame?"

Below, a violet in the dew
Breathed through the dark its vague perfume;
Above, a star in quiet blue
Touch'd with a gracious ray the gloom.

"Sing, friend, of me," the violet sigh'd,
"That I may haunt your grave with love;"
"Sing, friend, of me," the star replied,
"That I may light the dark above."

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GENIUS LOCI.

YES, this is the place where my boyhood
  Saw its beautiful season depart:
The butterfly flutter'd in sunshine,
  The chrysalis lies in my heart!

Still green are the hills in the distance,
  And breathing of Summer the farms,
But the years take the Present forever
  To the Past with their shadowy arms.

I wander in pathways familiar:
  Old faces forget, or are blind;
The footsteps of strangers have trodden
  The footprints I deem'd I would find.

Come back to me, beautiful visions!
  Steal over me, lovelier sky!
With the flower-like soul of my boyhood,
  Blossom, sweet days gone by!

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My boyhood, come back! In the sunshine
A hoop is the world of his care:
He gazes at me for a moment,
And passes away in the air!

Come back! From the school that is ended
Boy-faces rush joyous and bright:
One, only, among them remembers
And vanishes into the light!

Come back! With a kite in his heaven
His heart's happy wings are agleam:
He hearkens my call for a moment,
And flashes away with my dream!

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APART.

At sea are tossing ships;
  On shore are dreaming shells,
And the waiting heart and the loving lips,
  Blossoms and bridal bells.

At sea are sails a-gleam;
  On shore are longing eyes,
And the far horizon's haunting dream
  Of ships that sail the skies.

At sea are masts that rise
  Like spectres from the deep;
On shore are the ghosts of drowning cries
  That cross the waves of sleep.

At sea are wrecks a-strand;
  On shore are shells that moan,
Old anchors buried in barren sand,
  Sea-mist and dreams alone.

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AFTER A WHILE.

On the cold hills the moon lies white,
The ghostly Frost arises bright;
Lost winds wail in the homeless air,
Wandering wearily, every-where:
But, wrapt in dreams of summer mirth,
My cricket sings upon the hearth;
My heart to dreams his dreams beguile—
"*After a while, after a while.*"

Below the embers ashes darkle;
Above, the lithe flames leap and sparkle,
Dancing to all fantastic forms
Of all that gladdens, cheers and warms;
And, singing to my fancies sweet,
The cricket's spell the flames repeat;
My heart to dreams their dreams beguile—
"*After a while, after a while.*"

I shut my eyes: my life I see—
Oh, miracle!—a blossoming tree!

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(The world's sad winds, that cried for rest,
Cradled in blossoms slumber bless'd;)
And from its fragant-hearted May
Some sweet bird joins the cricket's lay;
Oh, tender songs my dreams beguile—
"*After a while, after a while.*"

Winds, rock the world in fairy dreams!
Rise, Frost, and haunt the sleeping streams!
Below the embers ashes darkle;
Above, the lithe flames leap and sparkle;
Sweet bird, bright flames, blithe cricket start
The same dear song of hearth and heart!—
I whisper low, with sigh and smile,
"*After a while, after a while.*"

Digitized by Google

'TO ———."

THE CALL OF THE YOUNG MAN.

Beloved One—whose gentle, floating form
  Visits my dreams in blissful heart and eyes—
Where art thou, Love? My heart is beating warm;
  From dreams alone, I rise!

Long have I known thee: first I saw thy face,
  With laughter ringing through thy girlhood years,
Kissing the Future with a buoyant grace,
  The Past with lighted tears.

Come from my dreaming to my waking heart!
  Awake, within my soul there stands alone
Thy marble soul: in lovely dreams apart,
  Thy sweet heart fills the stone!

Oft I have trembled with a maiden near,
  In the dear dream that thou wast come at last,
Veil'd in her face: oh, empty atmosphere!—
  Those dreams woke in the Past!

Digitized by Google

"TO ———."

It may be, thou hast ne'er had mortal birth,
Or childhood's wings to Heaven with thee have flown,
My Eve in Paradise! O'er all the Earth
Must Adam walk alone?

Oh, that thou breathest Earth or Heaven, I know;
I call, like Orpheus, into shadowy air:
Where art thou, dear? My heart makes answer low—
Its bridal chamber—"Where?"

Oh, waken in my morning thy pure eyes!
Thy voice from angel-air of dreams remove.
Sweet Chance! blow those strange seeds of Paradise
Together, flowering love!

While yet my life is in warm bloom, appear;
Come ere the first veil from the years depart.
Cottage with thee to me were palace. Dear,
Thy palace be my heart!

Digitized by Google

MELANCHOLY.

WHERE'ER I laugh a buried echo sighs;
Some coffin full of ashes
Uplifts its dead; a sea-deep sorrow lies
Under a wave that flashes.

I know not why this moan steals into May,
To make its joy so hollow;
Some woful hearse keeps hushing through the day—
My thoughts, dark mourners, follow.

Digitized by Google

FOLDED DOWN.

We read together—here the book.
(Eyes tender-lidded, drooping, brown!)
The bees were in the roses. Look,
The leaf is folded down.

It is the story, dear and old,
Whisper'd forever warm and new:
The world is in its age of gold
When two are lovers true.

We read together: in the sun
The brooklet laugh'd through grass and flowers,
All birds were singing; two in one
We clasp'd the fragrant hours.

The poet's flower—the rose of Love,
Whence all our costliest honey flows—
Was rooted in the book: above,
Within our hearts the rose!

Digitized by Google

The poet's dream—the vision, Love,
For which all sleeping wake, I deem—
Shadow'd each page with wings: above,
Within our souls the dream!

We read of Loss that leaves the heart
A sea-shell on vague shores of fate,
Murmuring, dumb: there walk'd apart
A maiden desolate.

A sail shone in the horizon's gleam
Where the moon came—a twilight ghost,
The specter of a vanish'd dream
That haunts a lonely coast.

What spider from the rose you kiss'd
Crawl'd, that we read no more that day?
We learn in many an autumn mist
The brightness of the May.

I turn the page—behold the prize:
The years like funeral ravens flown.
The sail 's reflected in the skies;
The shell has lost its moan.

Digitized by Google

From shade to sun, to bliss from grief!
  December 's warm'd by gracious May;
Oh, fools! we miss'd the golden leaf.
  I read alone to-day.

Is it a memory or a dream?
  (Eyes tender-lidded, drooping, brown!)
In that sad poem, Life, I deem,
  The leaf was folded down.

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THE LOVE-LETTER.

I GREET thee, loving letter—
  Unopen'd kiss thee free,
And dream her lips within thee
  Give back the kiss to me!

The fragrant little rose-leaf,
  She sends by thee, is come:
Ah, in her heart was blooming
  The rose she stole it from!

Digitized by Google

CONFIDANTS.

All things that know a lover's heart
  Know the warm secret closed in mine;
From all things eager whispers start—
  "We know, we know it! she is thine."

The swallow seeking southern skies,
  Where some clear summer waters shine,
Circles my tropic dream and flies,
  Singing, "I fly, but she is thine."

Pale flowers, which Autumn's lips have kiss'd,
  Whose far-off May gives back no sign,
Murmur farewell—their souls in mist—
  But smile, in dying, "she is thine."

The cricket from my hearth at night
  Thrills the vague hours with carols fine,
Singing the darkness into light,
  "After a while, and she is thine."

Digitized by Google

THE DESERTED SMITHY.

At the end of the lane and in sight of the mill,
Is the smithy; I pass it to-day, in a dream
Of the days whose red blood in my bosom is warm
While the real alone as the vanish'd I deem:
For the years they may crumble to dust in the heart,
But the roses will bloom though the gravestones depart.

In the loneliest evenings of long ago,
The smithy was dear in the darkness to me,
When the clouds were all heaping the world with their snow,
And the wind shiver'd over dead leaves on the tree;
Through the snow-shower it seemed to be bursting aflame:
How the sparks in the dark from the chimney came!

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It was dear in the past—and still it is dear,
In the memory old of the vanishing time,
When the binging and banging, and clinging and clanging,
In the heart of my boyhood, were music and rhyme;
When the bellows groan'd to the furnace-glow,
And the lights thro' the chinks danced out in the snow.

The irons within on the anvils were ringing:
There were glowing arms in the bursting gleam;
And shadows were glowering away in the gloaming,
That, suddenly bounding to giants, would seem
Now out of the open doorways to spring,
Now up in the rafters vanishing.

The smith I remember: oh, many a smile
Has played on his lips with me, and kind
Were the words that would lighten the gloom of his face—
His face, at the memory, gleams in my mind!—
With a heart that could beat in the heart of a boy,
A heart for his sorrow, a heart for his joy!

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Adown from the farm of my father once more
(That so long has forgotten us up on the hill)—
With the wings in my blood to the bound of the steed,
That passes the breezes so merry and shrill—
I seem to be flying; but, suddenly,
In the Past, alone, is my memory!

In a dream!—in a dream! But I pass it to-day:
No longer the furnace is bursting with flame;
No longer the music comes out of the door,
That, long ago, to the schoolboy came:
The winds whisper low thro' the window and door,
The chimney is part of the dust of the floor.

Phœbe Morris! sweet Phœbe! the sweetest of girls
That brighten'd old dreams with a beautiful face!—
It may be she smiled from her father's lips,
And blossom'd her smile in the dusky place!
Ah, she smiles, to-day, in my boyhood for me,
With her lips that are kissing—a memory!

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FALLEN LEAVES.

I LOVE to steal my way
Through the bright woods, when Autumn's work is done
And through the tree-tops all the dream-like day
Breathes the soft golden sun;

When all is hush'd and still,
Only a few last leaves, fluttering slow ·
Down the warm air with ne'er a breeze's will—
A ghost of sound below;

When naught of song is heard,
Save the jay laughing while all nature grieves,
Or the lone chirp of some forgotten bird
Among the fallen leaves.

Around me every-where
Lie leaves that trembled green the Summer long,
Holding the rainbow's tears in sunny air,
And roof'd the Summer's song.

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Why shun my steps to tread
These silent hosts that every-where are strown,
As if my feet were walking 'mong the dead,
And I alive alone?

Hast no bright trees, O Past!
Through whose bare boughs, once green, the sunshine grieves?
No hopes that flutter'd in the autumnal blast,
No memories—Fallen Leaves?

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AN ECHO.

"COME back," I sigh'd—
The flower
I dropp'd upon the tide
Was vanish'd many an hour.
"Come back," the Echo sigh'd

"Come back," I cried—
The love,
Flower-like I cast aside,
An angel bears above.
"Come back," the Echo cried.

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IN OCTOBER.

A FLUSH'D cathedral, grand with loneliness,
Gloomy with light and bright with shadow, seems
Thy catholic air, October. Holiest gleams
Alight like angels in each dim recess
Through the stain'd oriels of the east and west;
Thy floors float radiant with flutterings
Of moving shadows, ghosts of glorious wings;
Some organ's soul arises in the breast
Of him who walks thy aisles in revery bound:
The stops of silence tremble into sound.
Lo, Nature brings her dead for burial rite!
Upon thy solemn altars dress'd for Death
She lays her beautiful; the mother's brow
Is bow'd, while for her darling ones she grieves
And o'er their burial breathes her tenderest breath
As o'er their baptism in the April light;
And Autumn, gorgeous preacher, murmurs now
Sermons of dying flowers and falling leaves.

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THE BIRDS OF LONGING.

THE mournful Birds are flown
  That flutter'd in my breast
Through all the days of Spring,
  And fill'd me with unrest.

The Birds of Longing wild!
  They came in April skies,
Among the blossoming boughs,
  The wingéd prophecies.

Of unknown summer lands
  They sang their haunting dreams—
Poor tropic birds, asleep
  To wake in Arctic gleams!

"Whence came ye, Birds?" I said:
  They sang, "We have no home;
Lost are the nests we loved—
  We long, and long must roam.

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"Blown by the vernal winds,
Warm blossom-bearers, we
From soul to soul in Spring
Drift over land and sea."

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THE GRAVE OF ROSE.

I CAME to find her blithe and bright,
  Breathing the household full of bloom,
Wreathing the fireside with delight—
  I found her in her tomb!

I came to find her gathering flowers—
  Their fragrant souls, so pure and dear,
Haunting her face in lonely hours:
  Her single flower is here!

For, look: the gentle name that shows
  Her love, her loveliness, and bloom,
(Her only epitaph—a rose)—
  Is growing on her tomb!

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MOTHS.

At morn I walk in sunshine warm and tender;
My eyes look into Fairyland for hours:
The butterflies with Eastern lust and splendor
Grow wingéd counterparts to wingless flowers.

At noon I dream in meadows sweet and sunny;
My heart with summer songs and perfume glows:
The bees on sunburnt voyages for honey
Reach their Hesperides in every rose.

At eve I write by restless lamplight sitting;
My soul is full of shadowy, subtile things:
The ghostly moths around my lamp are flitting,
Guests of the light that, coming, lose their wings.

My poems, butterflies at morning gleaming,
And bees at noon, are but vague moths at night:
Look, the flame beckons—from the darkness streaming,
Wingless they drop at thresholds of the light!

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STEPS OF GHOSTS.

In the olden mansion lying,
That knew me long ago,
I see the far white river
Shivering in the snow.

The moon, so close by the window,
Freezes in the trees with her light—
A glitter of motionless silence,
All the ice-lit branches bright!

Jarring the drowsy stillness,
There are footsteps on the stair,
Lifting their ghostly echoes
From the chambers every-where!

How near they startle the stairway!
I feel the opening door!
Now, far and fainter, and dying,
They echo in me no more!

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In a moment the door will open!
  How near they grow again!—
They have left the ghost of their silence
  Walking within my brain!

Upon the haunted stairway
  I have heard them oft before;
In this olden house, returning,
  They haunt me evermore.

Strangers have never heard them—
  I know they all are mine,
Rising, O heart, and dying
  On that haunted stair of thine.

To me forever returning
  Myself forever fled,
Startling the stair forever and ever,
  I hear my footsteps dead!

O life, make braver thy beating!
  The terror on the stair
Is the long, long dread procession
  That follows thee every-where!

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THE STRANGE ORGANIST.

Deep in the dim cathedral gloom,
  Where incense all the ages rose,
I walk, alone. The mystic bloom
  Of saintly silence round me glows.

High Church of Song! O hallow'd place,
  Where haunt the hymns of bards of old!
Light shone on many a lifted face
  When holy floods of music roll'd.

Deep in the dim cathedral hush
  I stand alone, the Organ's keys
Touching with wandering fingers—blush,
  Sad soul, what harmonies are these!

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